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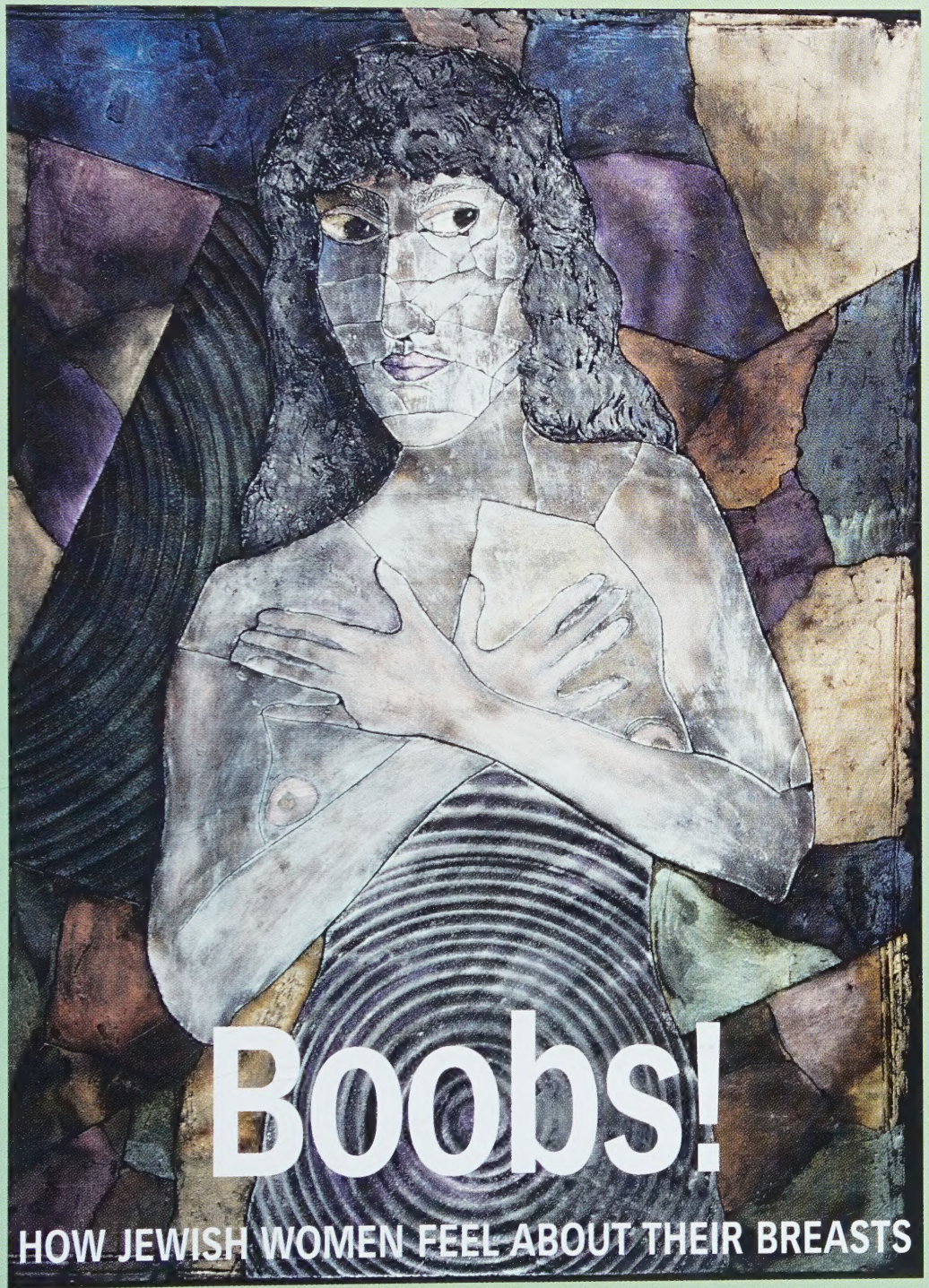
the independent Jewish women's magazine



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Jewish Mothers/Gay Sons

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Lilith

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from the editor

Surprising Silences

When I was a college student, I remember, I wrote a paper on passivity in the Romantic poets—the passivity of men, not women. I can't recall the poems that triggered my thoughts on the subject, but I still remember the chill it gave me to scrutinize the behaviors of people stifled and unable to act strongly for themselves, to be the agents of their own lives and destinies.

Tutored by the women's liberation movement, we have become old hands at understanding passivity bred of silence. The silence of the abused woman or girl who thinks she won't be believed if she names her abuser, the woman who fears retribution if she speaks the truth. We have learned to see the oppressive dynamics in families where women and children stifle their speech—and sometimes their dreams and desires as well—when they know that these will put them into conflict with a powerful male in the household.

All this "understanding" notwithstanding, I was shocked by two situations that leapt out at me as we were editing this issue of LILITH—a kind of silencing I would not have predicted we'd be experiencing this far along in the struggle. LILITH has always been a safe space for women to speak out. Yet two articles here are written by authors using pseudonyms, a situation I don't love as an editor. I bring their circumstances into the foreground here because it is urgent that we not deny to ourselves how difficult it still is for women to speak their truths.

> Why do some women still feel they can't speak their minds in their own voices?

Each author chooses for her own reasons not to write under her own name, but both women are driven by oppression. Neither could be persuaded to relinquish her anonymity. A mother writing about her gay teenage son regrets the need to hide her identity; she's doing it because her son does not feels safe enough in his public high school to be "out" in that community (though his buddies at Jewish summer camp have known for years). Haunted by news reports of hate crimes against homosexuals, she, understandably, honors his decision to remain closeted, at least for now. And a woman in her twenties, revisiting her bold choice at the age of 17 to defy her mother and have her breasts surgically reduced, finds herself unable to take that courage into her work life. She's a writer in the first years of her career, and her ambitions keep her from revealing her identity in print when she's writing about the change she has inscribed on her own body.

About breasts, a little background. Early adolescents dishing about their bodies talk about "getting your period." Among middle-aged women the body-talk is all about hormone-replacement therapy, osteoporosis and reading glasses. Breast cancer and its looming fears are a part of the subtext of any conversations among women, but unexplored until now has been another part of our breast consciousness. A dominant theme for many women in their twenties and thirties is how to have a buff form, a worked-out, tight taut body. This ideal is at odds with having large breasts (large in this case being relative, but perhaps meaning anything that jiggles when you run). And so the pleasures of breasts have been replaced, for some women, by a new breast-size anxiety.

Unlike menarche or menopause, the symptoms of which can be alleviated with Advil or yoga or estrogen, big breasts are likely to become smaller breasts only through surgery. And breast reduction surgery, if we can judge from how frequently the subject comes up in conversation these days, is a new rite of passage for women. While no breast surgeon would confirm for LILITH that Jewish women are more likely to seek out this surgery than other women, or that Jewish women are more likely to have breasts larger than some elusive "norm," LILITH's informal data suggests that this operation is on the possibility list of many young Jewish women. One says she is going to wait until she has a child, another says that she is interviewing all her friends who have had the surgery. A third says her friend's older sister had her breasts reduced in high school, but no one in the family talked about it. "Oh yeah," said a one-time LILITH writer. "I had my breasts reduced years ago. Didn't I tell you?" Well, as usual, the current articles in LILITH do more than give you the first-person accounts, and include an analysis of why minority women are more likely to view their bodies as too fleshy and too "primitive."

The shape of women's bodies is changing, and so, less dramatically, is LILITH's masthead. Sarah Blustain, an award-winning writer who has been on the staff for four and a half years, most recently as Senior Editor, joins our Contributing Editors now that she has moved from New York to Washington to become Managing Editor at The New Republic. Sarah's best-remembered features at LILITH include a cover story on Black/Jewish young adults and features on right-wing women, patriarchal wedding practices, a trenchant profile of the hate mongering talk-jock Dr. Laura, and a groundbreaking report on the sexual misconduct of the late Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach. LILITH has for years been a fertile and nurturing workplace for writers and editors, so at

the same time that we're sorry not to have Sarah's regular presence in the office, we are happy to continue to feature her writing and to benefit from her continued editorial input. Other changes: Yona Zeldis McDonough, a novelist and essayist, takes over as Book Editor in addition to her responsibilities for fiction in LILITH. Alice Sparberg Alexiou, whose byline has appeared several times in the magazine, comes on board as News Editor, and we welcome and we have invited two women in their mid-twenties into the process of creating LILITH: Assistant Editor Rachel Kranson and Contributing Editor Danya Ruttenberg. We welcome all the new and enriching presences into the LILITH office and to these pages.

Susan Weidman Schneider

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We print 10,000 copies of each quarterly issue of LILITH, reaching 25,000 eager readers. We are delighted to be able to bring the magazine to you, but we need your help to flourish. Like many not-for-profit enterprises, funds from subscriptions and advertising don't cover all the costs of producing this award-winning magazine. And unlike many not-for-profit periodicals, we're not bankrolled by any organization. LILITH is completely independent, which is one of the reasons we're able to bring you content and attitude you get nowhere else.

For 25 years LILITH has been supported by individuals and foundations who help us bridge the gap between income and expenses. Please join the women and men whose names you see listed in the next column by making a contribution to LILITH while you're enjoying the current issue.

You can send your tax-deductible contribution to LILITH, 250 West 57 Street, New York NY 10107 or fax your credit-card contribution to (212) 757-5705.

In the Garden of Eden, long before the eating of the apple...The Holy One created the first human beings—a man, Adam, and a woman, Lilith. Lilith said, "We are equal because we are created from the same earth."

—from The Alphabet of Ben Sira, 23a-b

Lilith

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kol

"The Voices of Women." Traditionally, the voice of the Jewish woman was not to be heard in public, lest it arouse men. No more. These pages are for news about Jewish women, in our own strong voices.

Abuse by Rabbis, Revisited

This season, the Orthodox Union and the Reform Central Conference of American Rabbis were doing a lot of public hand-wringing over inappropriate rabbinical conduct. The OU case involves Rabbi Baruch Lanner, who resigned from his position at the New Jersey arm of the organization's youth program after being accused of sexual, physical and psychological abuse of teenagers. Six months later, in December, Sheldon Zimmerman, one of the Reform movement's most prominent rabbis, resigned from the presidency of Hebrew Union College after the Central Conference of American Rabbis' seven-member ethics committee found him guilty of sexual misconduct. He has been suspended from the CCAR for two years. A special commission, appointed by the OU after The New York Jewish Week broke the story of Lanner's abusive behavior, issued a report in December documenting what it called "compelling evidence" of sexual misconduct over a period of many years. The Commission also faulted the organization's leadership for turning a blind eye to Lanner's abuses. It cited some members of OU's leadership for "profound errors of judgment in their handling of Lanner throughout his career." Numerous reports by teens and their parents had been dismissed as groundless.

As for Zimmerman, the Reform movement's ethics committee did not make public any details about his misconduct. The HUC said only that his ethics violations involved "personal relationships" that had occurred prior to 1996.

How have Jewish leaders responded to these traumatic events?

"Rabbi Zimmerman acted with great dignity in this case and accepted responsibility for his actions, and we're grateful to him for the manner in which he's responded, Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of Reform's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, told Beliefnet News Services.

Grateful? This is not the first time that the Reform movement has been disgraced by the behavior of some of its rabbis. In 1992, Rabbi Robert Kirschner, who had been sexually involved with congregants, was forced to resign his pulpit, The New York Jewish Week reported in December 2000. But he was retained in a positione of responsibility as an administrator at the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles, where he remains to this day.

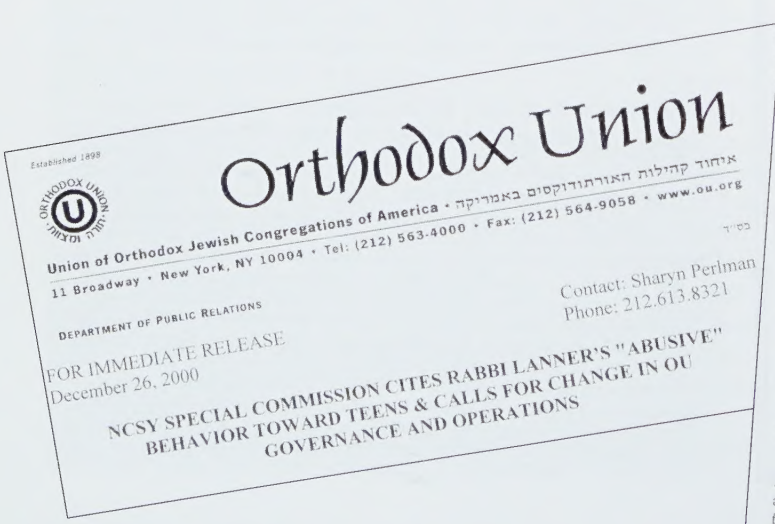
Statements like Rabbi Yoffie's do not answer the question: What about the victims? And what about the women with whom other rabbis may have behaved inappropriately, who will now surely come forward in the aftermath of the Zimmerman story?

"We don't have to scurry around to find ways to respond," said Rabbi Paul Menitoff, executive vice president of CCAR. "The mechanism is already in place, in the form of the ethics committee."

As for the Orthodox Union, in December its departing president, Dr. Mandell I. Ganchrow, told the New York Times that the OU had an obligation to assure the Jewish community "that we've learned our lesson from this." Yet it took additional pressure from angry parents before the OU finally forced the resignation of Rabbi Raphael Butler who, according to the special commission report, was one of several who long knew about but ignored Lanner's abuse of teenage girls.

A female rabbi who asked not to be identified said that while she preferred not to know the details of Zimmerman's sexual transgressions, she trusted that the ethics committee had done due process. However, she said, the "old boys network" had not. "And that's the frustrating thing to me," she said. "I've been criticized by my colleagues for supporting the complaimant. They say that I am being disloyal. As a woman, it's a little degrading."

— Alice Sparberg Alexiou



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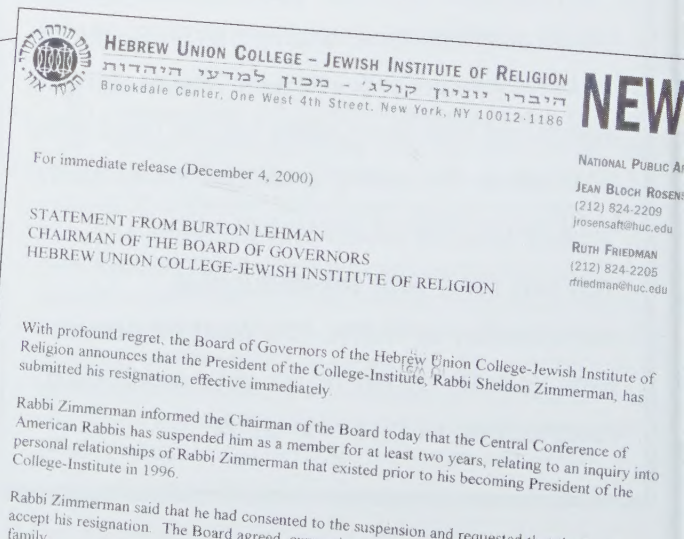
NCSY SPECIAL COMMISSION CITES RABBI LANNER'S "ABUSIVE" BEHAVIOR TOWARD TEENS & CALLS FOR CHANGE IN OU GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS



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STATEMENT FROM BURTON LEHMAN
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With profound regret, the Board of Governors of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion announces that the President of the College-Institute, Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman, has submitted his resignation, effective immediately.

Rabbi Zimmerman informed the Chairman of the Board today that the Central Conference of American Rabbis has suspended him as a member for at least two years, relating to an inquiry into personal relationships of Rabbi Zimmerman that existed prior to his becoming President of the College-Institute in 1996.

Rabbi Zimmerman said that he had consented to the suspension and requested that the Board accept his resignation. The Board agreed, expressing its concern for Rabbi Zimmerman and his family.

While Rabbi Zim

Israel, Feminists and Peace

As polls predicted, in February Israeli voters, demoralized by the escalating violence in the West Bank and Gaza, elected the hawkish Ariel Sharon Prime Minister by a huge margin. Nevertheless, even as more and more Israelis were losing confidence in Arafat as a negotiating partner, grassroots peace efforts spearheaded by women continued. For example, after the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed a resolution last October calling for the equal participation of women in all international negotiations, Israeli women took their cue. Alice Shalvi, founder of Israel Women's Network, and others urged Israeli women to use the resolution to demand their inclusion in the peace talks, which have been men-only.

From *Turbulent Times, Prophetic Dreams: Art from Israeli and Palestinian Children,* by Harold S. Koplewicz, MD, (Pitspopany Press).

Meanwhile, as violence has erupted in the last months in the West Bank and Gaza and in areas of Israel considered more secure until now, Israeli women have not remained silent.

"We believe that in order to bring about genuine and lasting social changes, it is important that women fulfill central roles in this struggle. We feel that the struggle for peace includes the struggle for equality and partnership between all citizens: Jews and Arabs, women and men," declared Bat Shalom, a grass-roots feminist group, in a recent position paper. Bat Shalom belongs to the umbrella group Coalition for a Just Peace, whose other members include Women in Black and Mothers and Women for Peace. These women activists have orchestrated several grassroots peace efforts in Israel — including a protest in Tel Aviv against road closings in the West Bank and Gaza attended by 500 women two days before the February 6 election — virtually unnoticed in the mainstream media, which have focused on large-scale male-only diplomacy. "Could it have something to do with the fact that we are, afterall, women?" peace activist Gila Svirsky asks.

• A joint Israeli-Palestinian rally took place on December 29 in Jerusalem, which Coalition member Svirsky reported on the listserve Bridges. "Women took the podium one by one, Palestinian and Israeli alternately," wrote Svirsky, "to speak movingly and passionately of both the suffering as well as the determination to end the bloodshed between our peoples." Four young woman, she said, climbed to the top of the wall, unfurling four banners that read: Shalom, Salaam, Peace, and End the Occupation in three languages.

• New Profile, which is made up largely of the mothers of Israeli soldiers, has been helping Israeli Arab women to organize food shipments to the West Bank. Residents there, New Profile reports, are facing food shortages.

• At the invitation of the Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank village Hares, Rabbis for Human Rights organized a group of Israelis in November to help with the olive harvest. The impetus for their activism came from a 29-year-old Israeli woman, Neta Golan, living in Hares what she names a show of support for the Palestinians.

"We need to push our society away from sexist militarism and towards peace, we need to nurture feminist women leaders," wrote Leah Shakdiel, on the Israel Feminist Forum listserve one month before Israel's elections. Shakdiel, who is Orthodox, was the first woman in Israel to serve on a religious council, in the town of Yerucham in the Negev.

But, Shakdiel admitted, the women's movement in Israel has been more successful so far in "grassroots stuff, social and media impact, than in official politics."

— A.S.A.

Finally, U.N. Welcomes Hadassah

In January, the United Nations Committee on Non Governmental Organizations (NGO) finally granted U.N. credentials to Hadassah, the largest women's (and also the largest Jewish and largest Zionist) organization in the United States. The vote to approve Hadassah, which had been deferred three times in the last year, was 9-5, with three abstentions. The organization had first applied for consultative status in the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECONSOC) in 1998. But the NGO authorities, in an apparent throwback to the infamous 1975 United Nations "Zionism Equals Racism" resolution (finally repealed ten years later), had objected. Why? Because the organization's full name is The Women's Zionist Organization of America.

In the Academy: New Programs for Women

Next fall, for the first time, undergraduates in Israel will be able to major in women's studies. Thanks to a $1 million grant from the National Council of Jewish Women, Tel Aviv University will have the first academic department in Israel devoted solely to this discipline. Taking their cues from the work of feminist scholars at American universities, Israeli universities began offering courses on women and women's issues in the '80s, said Professor Hannah Naveh, who will chair Tel Aviv's new Department of Women and Gender Studies.

"Over the years, feminist criticism and theory have developed immensely at Tel Aviv University," Professor Naveh said. Social science and literature departments now offer approximately 80 courses on women-related subjects a year, she said, with titles like "The Silence of Women in Israeli Cinema" and "The Construction of the Identity of the Mizrahi Woman." The Women's Studies department will now add core courses like "Feminist Philosophy," "Body and Body Image: Anorexia and its Cultural Origins," and "Women's Rights and the Struggle for Equality in Israel."

• In Potsdam, Germany, the World Union for Progressive Judaism opened in November the first rabbinic seminary in the German-speaking world since the Holocaust. At the Abraham Geiger College, women and men will study for rabbinic ordination.

What Should A Jewish Doll Look Like?

LILITH interns Naomi Goodman & Susannah Jaffe, Fall 1999

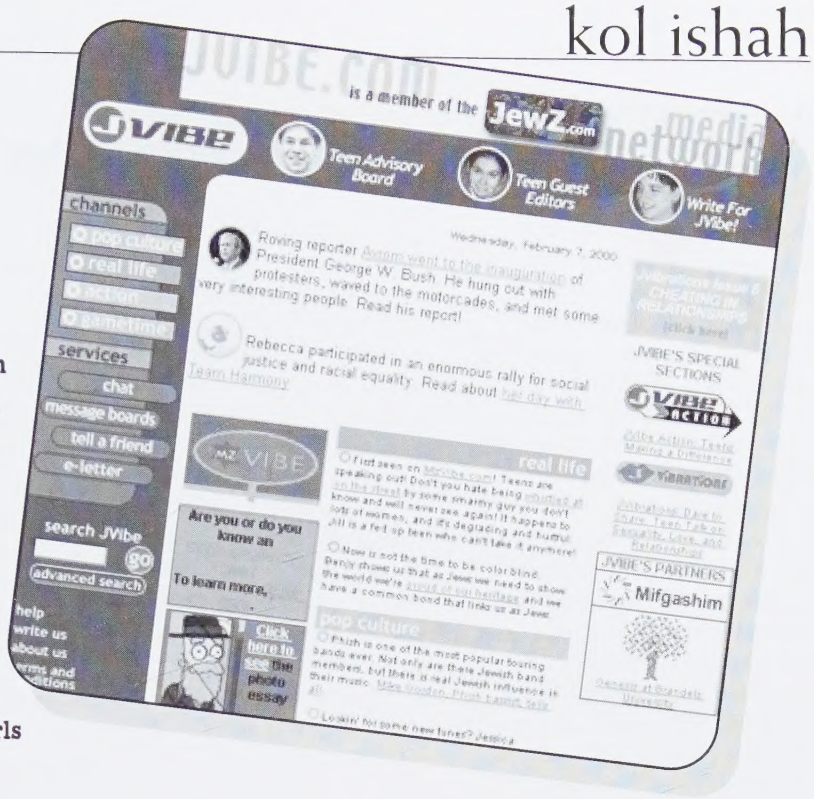
In the fall of 1999, LILITH took the Wisconsin-based Pleasant Company to task for not including a Jewish doll among its popular "American Girls" series, which includes Addy, the black slave girl, and Kirsten, the Swedish girl from Minnesota ["Dolls We Have Lived For"]. One year after we ran our story, Pleasant, a division of Mattel, introduced a seventh doll, Kit, a child of the Great Depression who is clothed in hand-me-downs. Kit is of indeterminate ethnicity.

And now, said Julie Parks, spokesperson for Pleasant, "We are happy to tell your readers that a Jewish doll is now in the works." But the Jewish-American doll will not appear until after 2002, said Parks, because of the extensive research involved in the production of each doll.

Stay tuned.

Where A Jewish Girl Can Wander on the Web

For Jewish women between 12 and 20 with cyber time on their hands, the following websites are worth checking out. Reviews are based on content quality and site design. LILITH is now planning a special page for Jewish teenage girls at www.lilith.org.



J-Vibe
http://jvibe.com

J-Vibe, one of many Jewish-content webzines published by Jewish Family & Life!, offers chat rooms and message boards with postings on topics that range from the Israeli political scene to Jews and tattoos. The "Real Life" section in January featured an interview with a religious lesbian teen activist in Massachusetts. An advice column by — hee, hee — Tel Aviv doles out information about such serious subjects as eating disorders. "J-Vibrations," features rabbinic responses to questions about sexuality, relationships, and love. By the way, J-Vibrations reports, six out of seven rabbis say it's okay to masturbate. Two of these wise souls are women, Susan Gulack and Alexis Roberts.

Teen-to-Teen
http://www.ttt.org.il

A project of the non-profit Sites for Education and Culture, TTT is based in Israel. Despite such basic flaws as barely-edited and sometimes out-of-date content, TTT is definitely worth a hit. TTT publishes teens' creative writing and visual arts, and the geographical diversity of the site's contributors will appeal to young girls who want to see what Jewish life is like beyond the local Jewish Community Center. On the "Teen to Teen Bulletin Board," topics range from dealing with divorce to adjusting to life in Israel.

Jewish.com
http://www.jewish.com/search/Youth

This supersite, which is hosted by AOL, purports to serve Jews "from the most observant to the most secular." It offers news, chat rooms, message boards, and online stores. Teenagers will mostly find it useful for its list of 80-plus links to other sites related to Jewish youth, although when we last checked, some of the links were outdated.

Ophira.com
http://www.ophira.com/

This irreverent site, created and operated by the Israeli-born Ophira Edut, self-proclaimed "chunky, funky, quarter-finding, bagel-eating JEW," blends Jewish wit with feminist repartee. Check out Jewgirl: Tales of a Babe in Goyland, (see what Ophira's grandmother and Madonna have in common) or find your Horahscopes (So, nu, vat's your sign?). Minnesota Jewgirl is a hilarious account of this 'desert diva's' five-month 'exile' to Minnesota.

http://www.mzvibe.com

It's Girls Only at this J-Vibe sister site. With book reviews, stories on everything from social action to JAP mythology, original artwork, Ophira Edut's rockin' advice column and lots of words from the maydeles themselves, it's definitely a must-surf. Don't let the too-cute-to-understand navigation throw you (MzHeard = music reviews, MzStory = fiction from contributing girl writers).

Jewish Women's Archive
http://www.jwa.org/

The Jewish Women's Archive aims to "uncover, chronicle, and transmit the rich legacy of Jewish women and their contributions." The site also addresses contemporary issues for Jewish girls and young women. Its "virtual archive" provides rich information on over 200 Jewish women through biographies, oral histories, diaries, personal papers, and photographs. This site also contains information about Bat Mitzvah traditions, along with practical suggestions for the ceremony and party.

— Elizabeth Bennett

Paying Attention to The Press

❖ After colleagues told Occidental College psychology professor Gail M. Gottfried three years ago that their department chair had complained about **her "typical New York Jewish personality,"** she confronted him, Scott Carlson reported in the November 16 issue of **The Chronicle of Higher Education**. And that, Gottfried told The Chronicle, is when her troubles began. Gottfried, who had previously received departmental evaluations that praised her scholarship and teaching, said she was ostracized by her colleagues. A subsequent departmental review accused her of criticizing and refusing to communicate with her colleagues. Finally, in May, Occidental College denied Gottfried tenure.

"The panel said institutional considerations—the effects of her alleged negative interactions with her colleagues—outweighed her strengths as a scholar and instructor," The Chronicle reported. About 680 students, or one third of the student body, and half of Occidental's professors have signed a petition, objecting that the faculty handbook does not adequately define "institutional considerations." Such vagueness, the petition states, "leaves untenured faculty vulnerable to a power differential and discrimination."

Gottfried plans to sue Occidental for discriminatory retaliation.

❖ As a result of pressure by L'maan B'nos Yisrael International, a group representing *agunot*, or "chained wives," whose husbands have refused to grant them a divorce, or *get*, Orthodox rabbis have issued guidelines for the *batei din*, the rabbinical courts that grant divorces, reported the January 5 edition of **The Forward**. Prior to this, The Forward said, **there was no oversight of *batei din*, which often dragged out divorce cases for years.** Some *batei din* have been accused of extorting money from women in exchange for granting them a *get*, which in traditional Jewish law must be initiated by the husband.

"Women had no rights," Marilyn "Mattie" Klein, founder of L'maan B'nos Yisrael, told The Forward. The new standards, which among other things, mandate that the *get* must now be the court's first order of business, were signed by Orthodox centrist organizations such as Rabbinical Council of America and the Orthodox Union, as well as individual rabbis.

But in the fragmented world of Orthodoxy, there is no central authority to enforce the new standards. "We still consider *beit din* to be a dangerous place for women," Susan Aranoff of Agunah Inc., another grass-roots group, told The Forward. "For the hardcore *aguna* problem, these changes are practically irrelevant."

❖ On the topic of agunot, the British newspaper **The Guardian** reported in December that Orthodox Rabbi Pini Dunner had placed a large ad in The Jewish Chronicle, in which he castigated one Yiki Loewenstein for refusing to grant a *get* to his wife Bryna. Yiki Loewenstein, religious affairs correspondent Stephen Bates wrote, has been refusing to grant his wife a divorce for nine years.

❖ In December, **USA Today** reported that **a Palestinian women's group sent a letter of protest to Yasser Arafat**, in which they demanded that the Palestinian Authority stop using their children as human shields. Aisheh, a mother of six, was quoted as saying: "We don't want to send our sons to the front line, but they are being taken by the Palestinian Authority." Aisheh and others refused to give their full names, USA Today said, for fear of reprisals.

— A.S.A.

❖ It's been years—four, in fact—since Anita Diament's debut novel, *The Red Tent*, made its quiet appearance in bookstores. A lively story that reimagined the biblical rape of Dinah into a surprisingly optimistic epic from Dinah's perspective (no rape here), the book was pleasant but unremarkable in its sales. Then the rustling started. Friends passed it around. Women were spotted with it on the subway. Rumors flew that Jewish book groups around the country were all on board.

Proving the book's breakthrough, in February **Newsweek** devoted a full page to the "word of mouth phenom." St. Martin's Press, which published the book, says in the February 5 issue that the book's sales initially numbered "not many," and **Diament decided to take charge. She sent the book to 1,000 rabbis, many of them women**, and they told their congregants, who told their friends, and so on. To date, the book has hit the New York Times and Los Angeles Times bestseller lists, has been optioned for a movie, and there are now three-quarter of a million copies in print.

Criticism came from an unlikely quarter, however. One Orthodox rabbi, "who did not wish to be associated by name with the book," told Newsweek he thought the book was a mockery. "'A woman was raped!'" he said. "'It's disgusting to portray it as a love story.'" ...There's more news in the same issue. Turns out that Linda Richman—inspiration for **Saturday Night Live's perpetually "farklempt" Jewess—is making a name for her real live self.** Newsweek reports that the "rising star" on the "self-hope" circuit has been lecturing at the Canyon Ranch spa, preparing talks for public television, and publishing a new book, *I'd Rather Laugh: How to Be Happy Even When Life Has Other Plans for You* - all in the "no-nonsense" style of "one of America's most famous Jewish mothers." Even self-help guru Deepak Chopra has taken notice. "'I have never met anyone who is as aggressively uncredentialed and yet so extremely helpful to people who are seeking some kind of solace,'" he told Newsweek. (Sound like anyone you know?) Still, Richman tells Newsweek hard knocks—a bad marriage to a compulsive gambler, her agoraphobia, her temporary homelessness after her divorce—have earned her the right to preach. Her advice? Talk talk talk. No surprise there.

— Sarah Blustain

Putting Baby Up for Adoption

Thank you for your feature on adoption ["Sex and Shame in a Different Era", Winter 2000]. In 1964 I was a pregnant teenager waiting out an illegitimate pregnancy and

arranging to give up the baby. At the last minute I chickened out, let myself be talked into a shotgun wedding, and kept the child. I've always felt guilty that I deprived my son of the perfect family the agency promised, forcing him instead to live with two impoverished teenagers in an ill-advised, abusive marriage that did not last as long as his childhood. If, as the article suggests, the agency might have been lying to me about this perfect home, then I feel a little better.

Cara Lamb
Santa Cruz, CA

I too suffered the indignities as a pregnant unwed teenager in 1967. I spent four months at a Louise Wise Home for Unwed Mothers in the New York City area. I was the only girl still in high school and was tutored so I would not fall behind.

Author Michele Kreigman asks, "Why did you give your child away?" We had no choice, at least not if we wanted the best for our children. Yes, it is difficult for later generations to imagine a time like we describe. A time when I was treated as if I had murdered someone, although my crime was that I had innocently loved someone.

When it comes right down to it, we all did have a choice. The choice we made was based upon the overwhelming love we had for our infants. We gave them the chance to be brought up by two parents who wanted a child desperately and were unable to conceive.

What we did was the best choice for our children, at a time when they would have suffered the indignities along with us. Yes, we now know that some of our children were abused; some were brought up by less than perfect people, but that is the chance we took. We, as most parents, did what we thought best at the time.

I have reconnected with my son who is now thirty-three years old. Although we both mourn the loss of each other as mother and son, we feel blessed to have found one another.

Ellen Blau
Bingham Farms, MI

Feminism Redux

A definition of the word "feminist" as used in the article "How Feminist Rabbis Are Transforming Jewish Life" [Fall 2000] would have helped this feminist. Author Sarah Blustain weights down the word "feminist" with so much baggage that I, a long-time activist for women's rights, am excluded from her vision of the feminist movement.

Blustain writes that one congregation "was set up with a feminist decision-making process characterized by a surprisingly generous sharing of power uncharacteristic of most traditional congregations." Later she states that the "valuing of the individual voice, of diverse experiences, and mutually satisfying solutions have long been tenets of feminist ideology." All of these may be laudable goals, but they are not necessarily feminist goals. They smack of "essentialist" or "difference" feminism, a theory founded on the belief that women are by nature different from men, and perhaps better—more likely to share power, to listen to all individuals, to operate by consensus, and thereby to improve human relations.

I do not believe that women are inherently more drawn to the informal, participatory, consensus-driven models Blustain describes than are men, and I certainly hope that no one reading Blustain's article came away with the impression that they are not feminists if they prefer a congregation led by a spiritual authority figure.

Piper Hoffman
Takoma Park, MD

I read Susan Ellman's poem "A Husband of Valor" [Fall 2000] with great interest. That interest turned into annoyance when I came to the lines

"His children rise up and call him blessed
His wife also, she patteth him on the head."

To me this smacks of contempt for anyone who would gladly take on the role we have been hoping men would assume in egalitarian households. One pats children and dogs on the head, not other grown ups and equal human beings.

Sarah M. Mendlovitz,
Riverdale, NY

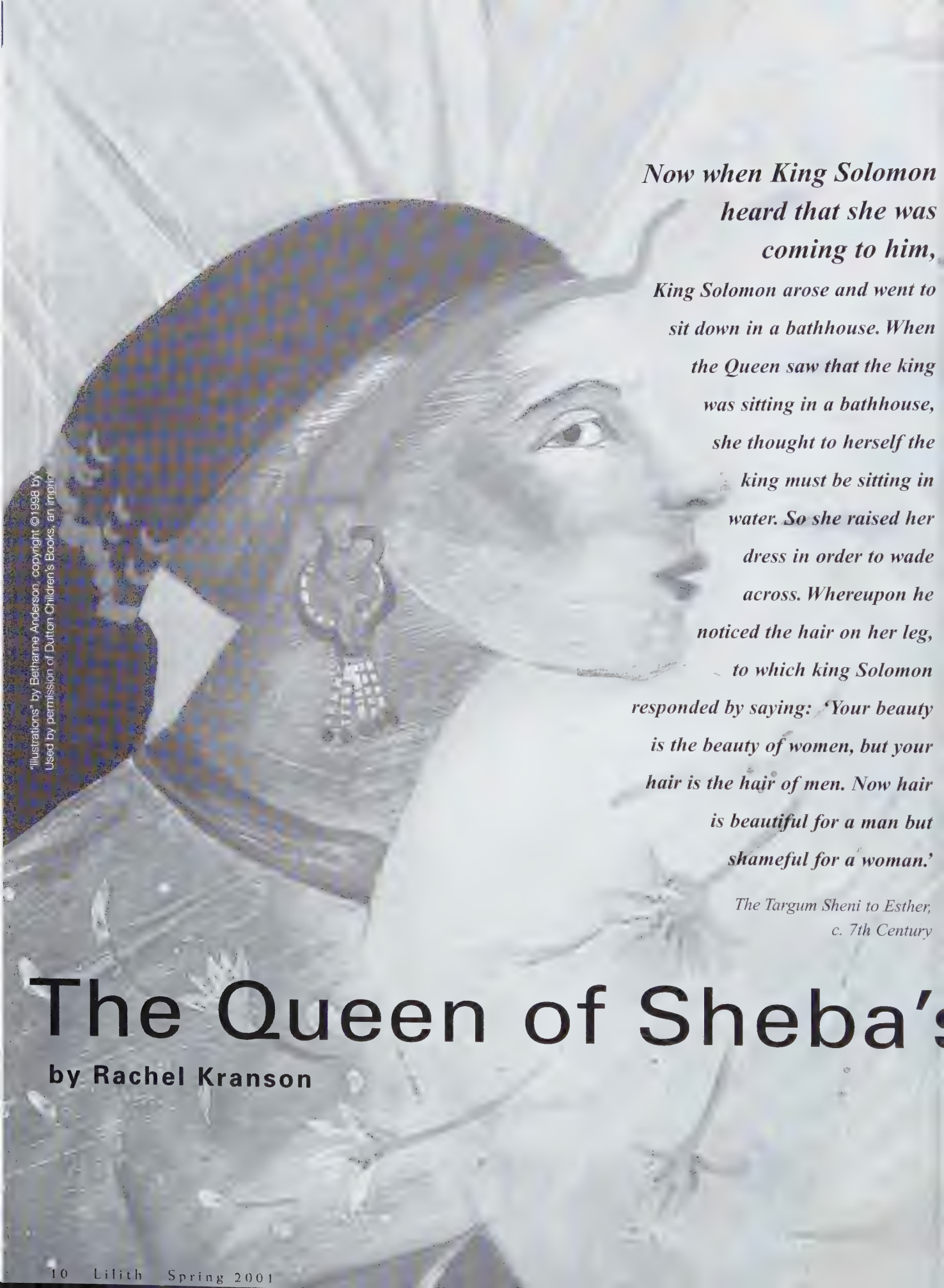
La Streisand

When I was a child in the '60's in King's Point, Long Island, going to the beauty parlor to have my hair straightened and decorating our "Chanukah Bush" were common practices. It was an era of affluence and assimilation. No one was bold enough to be "too Jewish". Then along came Barbara ["The Myth of La Streisand," Winter 2000] with her nose, her accent, reveling in her unapologetic Jewishness. And we Jews held our collective breath to see how she would be received by the American (non-Jewish) public. Who knew? She became a superstar. Barbra Streisand was the Hank Greenberg of her era, more than a celebrity. For Jews clinging precariously to their place in our culture, she was a messiah.

Elizabeth Schwartz
New York, NY

Amplification

Baltimore Hebrew University is not the only College of Jewish Studies to have been headed by a woman. Alice Shalvi served as rector (academic head) and then also as president of the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem (affiliated with the Jewish Theological Seminary) from 1997-2000. [Kol Isha, Fall 2000.]



Now when King Solomon heard that she was coming to him, King Solomon arose and went to sit down in a bathhouse. When the Queen saw that the king was sitting in a bathhouse, she thought to herself the king must be sitting in water. So she raised her dress in order to wade across. Whereupon he noticed the hair on her leg, to which king Solomon responded by saying: 'Your beauty is the beauty of women, but your hair is the hair of men. Now hair is beautiful for a man but shameful for a woman.'

The Targum Sheni to Esther, c. 7th Century

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The Queen of Sheba's

by Rachel Kranson

Fuzzy Legs

I stopped shaving my legs, on and off, when I was in college. It had more to do with laziness than with feminism: shaving just started to seem like a messy, time consuming chore in which I was no longer willing to indulge. After a while, my hairy legs started to grow on me aesthetically as well. My legs seemed bald and pasty when I got around to shaving them. After a while, this abstention became symbolic. In a small and gentle way, the hair on my legs marked my body as a body unafraid to play with gender, to break conventions, to get fuzzy.

My father was horrified. It even says in the Midrash that women should shave their legs, he told me, because when the Queen of Sheba came to visit King Solomon, he would not be with her until her legs were smooth.

Understandably, my father's argument did little to convince me that my legs would be better off bald. But his comments did start me thinking about the Queen of Sheba, and I am not sure that I have ever stopped.

The Biblical Queen

Many of us only know the Queen of Sheba as the one-time consort of King Solomon, but commentators from a variety of cultural traditions have provided her with stories and legends all her own. These cast the Queen in a number of different guises — and while some are easier to identify with than others, she is always a complicated character and is always, always alluring. In fact, it's surprising that her hairy legs first captured my attention, considering the many other interesting issues that have been associated with the Queen of Sheba.

According to the national epic of Ethiopia, the Queen of Sheba is the forebear of Ethiopia's royal dynasty, and through oral tradition the Ethiopian Jewish community also claims her as an ancestor. Islamic traditions imagine the queen as part djinn, and in Jewish mysticism and folklore she is sometimes interchangeable with Lilith. In many of the most traditional Queen of Sheba legends, issues of gender, power, and identity are treated with unexpected frankness, offering insight into present-day conflicts.

So how did the Queen of Sheba become a hairy-legged djinni? These questions bring us back to the Hebrew Bible, which contains the earliest written accounts of the Queen of Sheba legend [I Kings 10-13 and Chronicles 9:1-12].

Our heroine in far-off Sheba hears of King Solomon's famed knowledge and travels to Jerusalem to test him with "hard questions." When the king answers all of the Queen of Sheba's queries, and she sees the splendor of his kingdom, she is left "breathless." They exchange gifts, and King Solomon gives her "everything she desired and asked for." Finally, the Queen and her attendants return to the land of Sheba.

Like many stories in the Hebrew Bible, this brief tale leaves many questions unanswered. Where was this country of Sheba, ruled by a powerful woman? What were the "hard questions" the Queen asked Solomon? And of course, what about the tantalizing sexual subtext that is often read into this encounter? The text does say that the Queen was "breathless," doesn't it? What *were* those desires that King Solomon met so satisfactorily? You can almost picture centuries of exegetes rubbing their hands in delight, eager to fill in the blanks.

She has legends of her own–and they're all about gender, power and identity.

The Queen of Questions

In nearly all of their various formats, the Queen of Sheba legends give a gloss on power and otherness, on the relationships between the insider and the outsider. The set-up could not be more intriguing: Solomon, a male Israelite King and King David's anointed son, is the ultimate insider. He has all the benefits of gender, class, ethnicity and lineage, and his power would seem to be uncontestable. But what would happen if he met up with his opposite — a foreign, heathen woman — who would dare to challenge his authority? This is exactly the situation that the Biblical text sets up for us and for centuries of Biblical scholars. The situation is so unlikely, so unthinkable, but — the Bible seems to ask us — WHAT IF?

Throughout various times and traditions, we see variant versions of this encounter between the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon. Generally, in the more traditional texts, the fact that Solomon answers all of the queen's riddles is used to "prove" that the King is more suited for leadership. The Queen of Sheba, the presumptuous outsider, learns her lesson. She cannot withstand the wisdom and power of her "legitimate" opponent, and is dominated politically, intellectually, and sexually. In most of the texts, she is delighted by Solomon's victory – she is breathless with praise for her adversary, relieved by the assurance that Davidic men really are more fit for political power.

And yet, nothing that has to do with the Queen of Sheba is quite that simple. She is a wily queen, after all, and more than Solomon's match when it comes to "hard questions." In the Targum Sheni to Esther, an Aramaic commentary on the Purim story, the Queen of Sheba's riddles all have to do with paradoxes and complications that are as relevant to her own situation as they are to the abstract puzzle itself. What is "a cause of praise to the free, of shame to the unfortunate, a cause of praise to the dead, of shame to the living, of joy to the birds, of agitation to the fish?" asks the queen. When

Solomon answers that flax can be all of these things, he admits that one substance can have many purposes. Flax can be food that sustains a bird; it can also be made into a net with which to catch a fish. Flax can be made into a beautiful linen garment for the rich, or a crude garment for the poor; it can be made into clothes for the living or a shroud for the dead. The only thing that is clear about the use of flax is that it cannot be pinned down.

Pinning down the Queen of Sheba is as complicated as defining only one particular use for flax. She is a woman and a foreigner, and yet she does not behave like the women or the foreigners who typically cowered in the face of King Solomon's greatness. She is an outsider who acts like an insider. By challenging King Solomon and presuming to be his equal, she forces us to re-evaluate both of those categories.

The Queen of Sheba does not give Solomon any way to win her game of wits. By admitting that flax does not fit in to any one category, Solomon must acknowledge that human beings can also behave in conflicting ways, and that the Queen of Sheba can simultaneously be a woman, and a powerful ruler. Of course, if he does not admit this, he loses to the Queen of Sheba because he cannot answer her riddle.

As we learn from the Queen of Sheba, there are some competitions you can neither win nor lose. The world is just too fuzzy.

The Queen of Complexities

When I first encountered the Queen of Sheba stories, I identified with her completely. There was the Queen of Sheba, a fuzzy-legged woman like me, struggling against the male king who would limit her access to power and influence. I was the Queen of Sheba, engaged in a game of wits with the anti-feminist Rabbis who enforce unfair religious rules. I was the Queen of Sheba, struggling against the politicians and corporate leaders who create inequalities, support sexist laws, leave women on the outside.

But the Queen of Sheba is not easily owned – not by King Solomon, and not by me. Also linked with Africa and with blackness, the Queen of Sheba represents the cultural categories that our society continues to exploit, exoticize, and push toward the "outside." In a particularly Jewish context, the Queen of Sheba has been associated with the African and Middle-Eastern Jews who have been situated on the margins of the community, and are engaged in a struggle with Ashkenazic "insiders" for influence, power, and basic respect. As an Ashkenazic American woman, what is my relationship to the people who are even further on the outside? Am I the Queen of Sheba, as I had always presumed to be, or am I, in fact, King Solomon?

The Queen of Sheba is of the "wrong" gender and the "wrong" origin — the very embodiment of the outsider. And yet, as one might expect from such a slippery and complicated queen, she also reminds us that the relationship between the insider and the outsider can shift. At different points in our lives, in different contexts, every human being gets to play the role of the Queen of Sheba as well as that of King Solomon. In fact, we can well imagine the Queen of Sheba herself playing the "insider" in interactions with her own servants and subjects. Caught in the paradoxes and complexities of a fuzzy world, the Queen of Sheba too can be complicit in injustice.

In a world where our roles are always shifting, the encounter between the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon becomes symbolic of the very moment of struggle, the pivotal point at which we learn to secure power in some contexts and to share power in others. Being a Jewish woman — and an "outsider" in certain contexts — does not make me incapable of oppressing others, of supporting a system of hierarchies and inequalities, of pledging tacit allegiance to King Solomon. What is my relationship to the sweatshop workers who create the clothes that I wear? What is my relationship to the people who pick the grapes that I eat? In a fuzzy world, everyday choices are pregnant with significance, as monumental as the royal encounter between King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba.

The Queen of Symbols

And for me, the Queen of Sheba always leads back to fuzzy legs. My fuzzy legs are my tribute to a fuzzy world, in which categories of gender, origin and identity become blurred at the edges, fuse into one another, and cannot contain the totality of who I am. They remind me that I am never completely helpless nor am I ever completely powerful — the rules of fuzziness do not allow for absolutes. They remind me that I can be a cause of praise to the free, as well as a cause of shame to the unfortunate, and all at the same time. Through a world full of paradox, riddles, and hard questions, I travel on my own fuzzy legs.

If you yearn for more Queen of Sheba lore, the following can fill in some blanks:

- Other Queen of Sheba legends are found in *The Midrash Mishlei, The Midrash Ha-Hefets, The Pseudo Ben-Sira,* and the *Targum Sheni to Esther.* For a translation of all these sources, as well as sources from the Muslim tradition, see Jacob Lassner's *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba.* (University of Chicago Press, 1993).

- For a playful retelling of the Queen of Sheba's trip to Jerusalem, look at Alicia Ostriker's "The Wisdom of Solomon" from *The Nakedness of the Fathers.* (Rutgers University Press, 1994).

- Want a children's book with a worthwhile social agenda? Read *King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba* by Blu Greenberg and Linda Tarry (Pitspopany Press, 1998). Contemporary issues of Jewish and African American relations, Ethiopian Jewry, and feminism provide the subtext for this charming story.

- Marina Warner has written a children's Opera called *The Queen of Sheba's Legs*; she discusses it in *Out of the Garden: Women Writers on the Bible,* edited by Christina Buchmann and Celina Spiegel. (Ballantine Books, 1995).

- For some *Ten Commandments* — style Hollywood kitsch, rent the film *Solomon and Sheba,* directed by King Vidor in 1959. The Queen of Sheba is not given a proper name in this movie, but she is called "That Sheban Slut" so often that you might mistake it for her actual appellation. You get to see Queen of Sheba in a variety of slinky dresses, and Yul Brynner with a full head of hair. The movie is replete with a booming-voiced God and a healthy dose of early Zionist propaganda.

— *R.K.*

JEWISH MOTHERS & Gay SONS

In this scene from the 1983 production of Harvey Fierstein's Torch Song Trilogy, *Fierstein, playing alter-ego Arnold Beckman, is trying to survive a visit with his long-suffering mother (Estelle Getty). The Tony award-winning play opened the discourse on gay sons and their Jewish mothers. Two decades later, LILITH looks at how a Jewish mother responds when she discovers that her adolescent son is gay.*

Gerry Goodstein. Used with permission of Harvey Fierstein

by Sarah Epstein*

It is 1990, and my younger son, David, is seven. He is standing at my dresser, digging through his favorite drawer of my jewelry box. He has extracted several ropes of fake pearls and a Venetian glass necklace that my mother gave me when I was a little girl. Looping them around his neck, he is peering at himself in the mirror.

As I watch him, something goes off in my head. David often plays with my jewelry. So did his older brother, Jeffrey, when he was little. But certainly not past the age of, say, four. And never the way David is now doing, lovingly stroking the glass beads and holding them up to view.

There had always been something different about David, things that I'd been picking up for the past few years. Like the fact that he didn't hang out with packs of basketball-playing boys as his older brother did, but preferred the company of little girls. "He's so mature for his age," my mother often remarked. Yes, he was. Adults adored David. So polite, so considerate, people told me. So different from other children. *Different*. When I *potchked* in my garden, David helped me. He'd dig the holes for the plantings, carefully water the seedlings. Or he went ice skating with me when our family was on vacation in the Adirondacks. Holding hands, we glided on the bumpy surface of the frozen lake. When I fell, David helped me up, and we hugged. We women insist that we want to find such kind, gentle traits in all men. Don't stereotype, I told myself. But when David and I were skidding around on the ice together, my radar told me that he would not grow up to be like most men.

It was that moment when David was seven, trying on my beads in front of the mirror, that I suddenly, absolutely knew that David was gay. I didn't share my epiphany with anyone. Part of me was still hoping I was wrong, that I had been misreading the many signals. As my son approached adolescence, I paid even more careful attention. He began to spend a lot of time in his room, alone, listening to music and reading books. Among his favorites were Franc's Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* and *The Little Princess*. Hardly the choices of other boys his age.

One Saturday morning as my husband and I were making our bed, he asked me, would it bother you if one of our kids were gay? I shrugged carefully.

* Because my gay son does not feel safe enough to be completely "out," I have used a pseudonym. I have changed the names of my family members as well. I very much regret this necessity.

"If one of them *is* gay," Arthur continued, "it's not Jeff."

We sat down on the edge of the bed together and talked. It was not only I who had sensed since he was young that David was homosexual.

"Are you okay with it?" I asked Arthur.

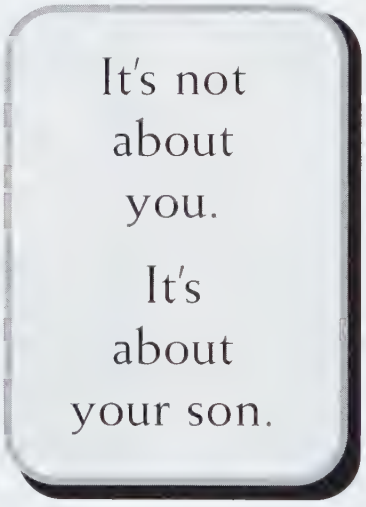
Of course, he said. He only worried, he said, about what David might suffer in a world where homophobia is the last socially acceptable form of discrimination. My husband's words stirred up my most primal parental fears. Gay teens, I had read, were at particular risk for suicide. And homicide. And AIDS. I stuffed my scary thoughts into a dark corner, and assured my husband that David would be fine. For the time being, we decided, we would keep our realization to ourselves. The better to protect not only David from a hostile world, but ourselves as well.

In the meantime, I worried constantly. Once David came home from school and told me that a friend had taunted him with the words, "You're such a girl!" My heart hurt. Did David yet sense that he was gay? He certainly knew what homosexual meant. I had made a point of bringing up the subject occasionally at home. I had told him, for example, that one of my best friends at college was a gay man.

I consulted a psychologist. Yes, she said, kids who are gay know it when quite young. At least, they know that they are *different* from their peers.

How can I help him? I asked her.

Wait until he tells you, she said. I sat on my hands, and began to notice how casually people tossed off anti-gay slurs. One day, in a liquor store, I overheard a conversation between two men. One of them said "faggot," upon which both broke out in guffaws. My throat tightened. I stood still for a moment. Then I walked over to them and stuck my face right into theirs. They turned to me, startled. Who, they were doubtless wondering, was this crazy woman?



"Do you know what homophobia is?" I asked them. They continued to stare at me.

"It means hating people because they are homosexual. How do you know that there is not somebody in this store who is gay, who can hear you spewing your garbage?"

Neither man said a word. I turned my back to them and walked away. This crazy woman, I was thinking, is the mother of a gay son. And she's not just any mother. She's a Jewish mother.

The women's movement made it okay for Jewish mothers to acknowledge their lesbian daughters. But up to now, we haven't heard much about their gay sons. And why? Is it because the subject is still *verboten*? Picture two yentas cluck-clucking in hushed tones over poor so-and-so's son. But offensive as it is, the crude Jewish-mother stereotype, the one Harvey Fierstein depicted so scathingly in his play *Torch Song Trilogy*, sometimes seems true. She's standing on the corner with you waiting for the school bus, or car-pooling with you for Hebrew school. When her son finally gets the courage to tell her he is gay, she says to him, "How can you do this to me?"

"My dreams were crushed," said one mother to me recently. She was describing what it was like for her when her son came out to her at age 26. Her son is now 40. "I walked around with my head down," she said. To this day, she said, only her closest friends and family know. "And I'm sure that they are glad that it's my son who is gay, not theirs," she said.

How can you be so selfish, I wanted to scream at this mother, who still thinks that his homosexuality is a *shanda*. It's not about you. It's about your son.

Yet, for 16 years, this same Jewish mother has been active in Parents, Families and Friends of Gays and Lesbians, or PFLAG, a national organization dedicated to supporting families and educating the public. Of her four children, she says, she is closest to her gay son. The new openness about homosexuality, she said, is "a wonderful thing."

So like any stereotype, the one about the narcissistic Jewish mother is only a crude outline. The truth about her is more complicated. Eric Marcus, author of *Making History: the Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights*, who is gay and has been writing about gay issues for 13 years, says that none of his friends' Jewish mothers rejected them outright. It is not only Marcus who tells me this, but also the experts.

"A Jewish mother's connection to her son is so strong, that she's not gonna let him go," said Ritch Savin-Williams, professor of psychology at Cornell University who has conducted studies on how parents respond to their children's coming out. Nevertheless, he said, a Jewish mother will often scream and yell when her son tells her that he's gay. When his Jewish partner came out, he said, "his mother cried every night." But she still loves him.

Compare the reaction of the Jewish mother with the shocking figure cited by the Hetrick-Martin Institute in New York, which studies and treats gay adolescents: 25 percent of gay teens who come out to their parents are thrown out of their homes. *Thrown out.*

In stark contrast, Jewish mothers are right out there, sporting red ribbon pins set in *Magen Davids* as they participate in the struggle for gay rights. Mothers like Jeanne Manford, who in 1972 marched with her son in New York's Gay Pride parade, carrying a poster with the words: PARENTS OF GAYS UNITE IN SUPPORT OF OUR CHILDREN. Manford and a handful of other parents with gay children started a group, "Parents of Gays," which eventually became PFLAG. Like many gay men of his generation, Manford's son Morty died of AIDS in 1992. This issue proved that society's insistence that the gay community remain invisible was not only discriminatory but lethally dangerous.

Agnes Herman, 79, speaks about the difference between then and now. Her son, Jeff, who like Morty Manford died of AIDS, came out to his parents in 1969, when he was 20. Like every one of the dozen or so mothers I spoke with, Herman had picked up signs of her son's homosexuality when he was still a child. (According to Cornell psychologist Savin-Williams, so do most mothers of gay sons.) Herman is a social worker, her husband Irwin a rabbi. Back then, she said, both of them were

"It works better for me as a rabbi not to talk about this issue."

Both the Reform and Reconstructionist movements have developed careful policies about being gay and Jewish. At the Reform movement's rabbinical seminary, Hebrew Union College, the required course in crisis counseling includes specifics on how to minister to parents who tell you that their child is gay.

"I counsel them to leave the door open," said Rabbi Paul Steinberg who teaches the course. "Otherwise, a curtain will remain. It can be velvet, or iron."

But the news is not all good. The Orthodox movement has yet to budge from its stance that homosexuality is "an abomination." Washington D.C. rabbi Barry Freundel, who is perhaps best known as Senator Joseph Lieberman's spiritual advisor, told LILITH that he doesn't accept the premise that somebody is born gay. Rather, he said, the issue is homosexual activity. Which, he said, is forbidden in *halakha*. When congregants confide in him that a child is gay, he said, his advice to them is to encourage the child to avoid homosexual behavior.

But did he not see, LILITH asked, any dilemma in such a response?

"As long as you think of homosexuality as a behavior, it doesn't present a dilemma," Rabbi Freundel said. Jewish law, he said, does not permit us to give in to all our desires.

"You've fallen into the trap of using bedroom behavior to define somebody," he added testily. "And your magazine, which is feminist, should certainly be opposed to that!"

The Conservative movement's position towards gays is not much better. It is an open secret that there have been gay rabbinical students at Jewish Theological Seminary. But the movement, in a "don't ask, don't tell approach," does not ordain openly gay rabbis.

And on this issue, the movement is torn, said Rabbi Debra Newman Kamin of Am Yisrael Conservative Congregation in suburban Chicago.

Had any of her congregants confided in her that a child was gay? "Not to my recollection," Rabbi Newman said. But perhaps three or four gay congregants or their parents, she said, had casually mentioned their homosexuality to her in passing.

"But it's not something that's openly talked about," Rabbi Newman said. "And what about the people who were too scared to tell me?"

One Conservative rabbi, speaking off the record, said he was "deeply troubled" when LILITH told him that state money supported a teenage gay and lesbian coffeehouse. The gay life style, he said, is prohibited by halakha.

"I used to say this from the pulpit," the rabbi told LILITH. "But then I realized there were congregants who had gay children. So I toned it down. It works better for me as a clergy member not to talk about this issue."

When asked about the Reform movement's vote on gay commitment ceremonies, one rabbi snapped, "That's all the movement thinks about these days."

scared to death of the subject. She was scared to tell her family, her friends. In those days, she said, there was nobody to talk to, only secrecy.

But today, says Herman, families no longer have to bear "the terrible burden of a secret." Today, Jewish women's organizations including Hadassah support causes such as AIDS research.

Rita Kaplan knows all about the pain that comes from silence. Kaplan, 73, also lost her son, Paul, to AIDS. Her husband's cousin Alvin, she said, was also gay. Everybody knew, but nobody talked about it. In 1943, Alvin was discharged from the army for reasons never explained, but surely, said Kaplan, because he was homosexual. Soon after, he committed suicide by jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge. Her husband's brother, she said, also had a gay son, Ronnie. Like his cousin, he died of AIDS.

Kaplan said that neither her husband, Stanley, founder of the Kaplan testing empire, nor his brother, both of whose sons died of AIDS, ever talked about it. The Kaplan's family foundation actively supports AIDS research and other gay-related causes, both here and in Israel.

"I'm the only one who talks in this family," said Rita Kaplan. "But somebody has to talk. Right?"

Ninth grade. Hormones surge. This is an awful enough time for hetero teens, I tell myself. How much worse it must be for a gay kid. Especially one who hasn't yet told anybody. David isn't telling us much about his life outside our home. Are other kids harassing him at school? Has he had any sexual contact yet, with either sex? Kissing, hugging? Or even oral sex, not an unlikely possibility for a 14-year-old? He has certainly had opportunities. For the past two years he has been attending a Reform Jewish sleepaway camp. My husband has several long talks with him about safe sex, in which he mentions gay sex. AIDS is a nagging fear.

Two days after David's fifteenth birthday. My husband Arthur goes to pick him up from a play rehearsal. It is late; both guys are tired and cranky. I am in bed, half asleep. When they arrive home, I hear them arguing. David had to wait at school for a few minutes, and is giving his father hell.

"Don't you pull that obnoxious teenager stuff on me," Arthur shouts at him.

"You mean obnoxious *gay* teenager." As soon as the words slip out of David's mouth, he races up to his room, slamming the door. Arthur follows him up the stairs. He knocks on the door. Entering his son's room, he finds David lying on his bed, sobbing. He cradles David in his arms.

"It's all right, it's all right," Arthur says. David alternately sobs and talks excitedly. His relief at letting out his secret, Arthur tells me later, was palpable.

I am asleep during this exchange, and only learn about it later when Arthur gets into bed with me. I wake up and immediately sense his agitation.

So What Should A Jewish Mother Do?

"Any indication of a boy's feminine side throws us into panic, and makes us fear that they are gay." says clinical social worker Don Cornelius. For example, Cornelius said, a boy's trying on his mother's jewelry doesn't always mean that he is gay.

If you suspect that your son may be gay, it may be helpful for family members to talk with a competent psychotherapist. Experts caution against therapists who offer "reparative" treatment, i.e. treatment that purports to "cure" homosexuality. Local PFLAG chapters (www.pflag.org) may be a source of referrals. And the American Psychological Association, the National Association of Social Workers, and the American Psychiatric Association all have divisions specializing in gay and lesbian issues.

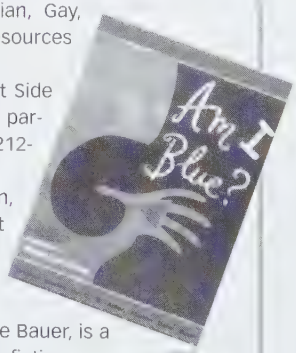
Cornelius, who is himself gay, adds, "On the one hand it is affirming for a gay person to speak to a gay therapist. But the real test is whether the therapist's clinical point of view is compatible with the patient."

Typically, when a teenager tells a parent or a school counselor that he thinks he might be gay, the response is, "Oh, don't worry about it, everyone has those feelings," said clinical psychologist Ed Dunne, director of the Pride Institute at The Ackerman Institute for the Family in New York. But this dismissive response, said Dunne, is incorrect, and has the potential to harm the teenager. Last year Dunne surveyed 50 gay and 50 straight adults about whether they had struggled with their sexual identity when they were teenagers. All of the gay adults, but only two of the heterosexual ones, he said, had struggled. Many psychologists, social workers and psychiatrists, he said, are as guilty as parents of resorting to a dismissive response to a gay teen's approach. Instead, Dunne said, a therapist should be asking a questioning teenager such things as: How much do you know about coming out? About the gay and lesbian community?

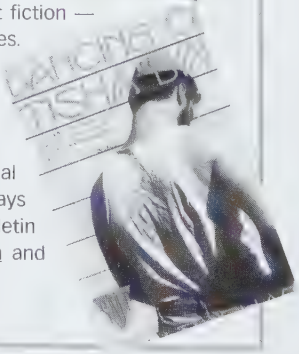
PFLAG offers parents referrals to support groups. For Jewish gay and lesbian resources, check the World Congress of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Jewish Organizations website (www.wcgljo.org). The National Union of Jewish Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Students (www.nujls.org) also lists resources for college students.

In New York, the Jewish Community Center of the Upper West Side sponsors a monthly advocacy group, "New Jewish Voices," for the parents of gay children, as well as programs for gay teenagers. Call 212-580-0099.

Eric Marcus' *What If Someone I Know is Gay?* (Price Stern Sloan, 2000), is a straightforward book for teenagers with an extensive list of resources. The American Psychological Association has just published *Mom, Dad, I'm Gay: How Families Negotiate Coming Out* by Cornell psychologist Ritch Savin-Williams.



Am I Blue? Coming Out from the Silence, edited by Marion Dane Bauer, is a collection of short stories by well known authors of young adult fiction — such as Lois Lowry and Jane Yolen — that address gay themes. Harvey Fierstein's funny and poignant *Torch Song Trilogy*, which won the Tony Award in 1983, still speaks directly to any gay teenager, and especially a Jewish one. Ditto for Lev Raphael's *Dancing on Tisha B'Av*.



Finally, a word about the Internet. Bearing in mind the usual caveats never to post your address or phone number and to always use a pseudonym, there are bona fide moderated chats and bulletin boards especially for gay teenagers at www.QueerAmerica.com and www.Planetout.com.

"What's wrong?" I murmur.

"David told me that he is gay," my husband says. His voice quavers a little.

For a few minutes I allow myself to feel sorrow. I am thinking that my son will sleep with men, experience persecution, and never have children. But with my sadness comes gratitude to David for trusting us. What more potent subject for a teenager to talk about with his parents than his sexual feelings?

I clutch at Arthur's hand. "Thank God," I whispered. "Thank God he told us. Now go to sleep." It is very late. Arthur turns over on his side. But now I am alert. I lay awake for a while and try to banish from my mind the story about Matthew Shepard, murdered five months earlier in Wyoming.

A few weeks later, when Jeff returned home for spring break and David came out to his brother, the four of us agreed that David should not come out at high school. Even though two years had already passed since Ellen De Generes' *doppelganger* sit-com character had told her viewers that she was a lesbian, despite all the hype about what a brave new world it is for homosexuals, it's not yet safe. Especially for a gay *teenager*. Jeff told us that the homophobia he'd himself witnessed at the high school was ubiquitous and ugly. When two gay guys who decided to come out walked hand-in-hand down the halls, people had shoved them, spat at them, called them names.

It is especially hard for gay boys, for whom the parameters of "normal" behavior are stricter than for girls. Nobody looks askance when girls hug, or have sleepovers. "If a young girl falls in love with her best friend, so what?" said Ritch Savin-Williams. For girls, he said, it's OK to have what psychologists call "passionate friendships."

But with boys, it's a different story.

"Boys are far more self-conscious being physical with each other than are girls," says Eric Marcus. "There's less room for them to be themselves." I kept my worries to myself, but suggested to David that he talk to a therapist. He agreed, and I found a gay male social worker (see sidebar), a family therapist.

Four months after David came out to us, he left for camp, eagerly looking forward to seeing his many friends there. A few weeks later, we received a letter. In it

he announced that he had told one of his friends that he was gay. The friend was straight. "Because she is like my closest friend, and she's kewl (sic) with all that stuff," my son wrote. And now, he continued, "all my good friends know I'm gay, and obviously don't care." He had also made a few gay and lesbian friends. "They are totally open to the camp," my son wrote. "Which is great!"

When he returns from camp, David comes out to his two closest friends, both straight boys. "That sucks that you couldn't tell us before," says one of them. His friend's awkward, slangy expression of support makes his kindness all the more genuine. Eventually David tells his favorite teacher. She says to him that she is honored by his trust. Everybody in whom David confides assures him that his "secret" is safe with them.

Every day, at school, David's homosexuality must remain a secret, because he doesn't feel safe. Every day, from 7:30 until he comes home, he must hide a huge part of himself. One night he comes into our room to talk. "Do you know what it feels like, not to be able to openly be what you are?" He is sobbing, and the three of us end up sobbing together on the king-sized bed. He lets me hug him, something that is becoming increasingly rare.

Still, he finds safe spaces. He begins to attend a weekend coffeehouse for gay and lesbian teens, which is funded by the state health department. Here gay teens shoot pool, dance, and drink soda. A staff of trained social workers is on hand, to whom the kids bring questions that they can't ask elsewhere. What does it mean for a gay teen to date, to attend the senior prom? How do you practice safe sex? How can I make my parents understand that being gay is not a choice? The coffeehouse is a mother's dream, the safest place on earth for your kid. Sometimes David's straight friends, male and female, accompany him, to show their support. The coffeehouse, his friends say, is cool.

The Reform movement also provides David with a haven. He is in close touch with his camp friends. He goes to a Reform Jewish youth group convention in Los Angeles which features a workshop for gay and lesbian teens. He has signed up for it, he tells me, because it is a good place to meet somebody. I feel happy for him. He is also active in our temple youth group, where he meets a boy struggling with his sexuality. David and Jason (not his real name) begin attending the coffeehouse together. Jason's parents, also temple members, are having a lot of difficulty accepting his homosexuality. Like many of the teens at the coffeehouse, Jason goes there without his parents' knowledge.

Jason's sister recently called him "faggot." Jason swore back at his sister. His mother reproached him.

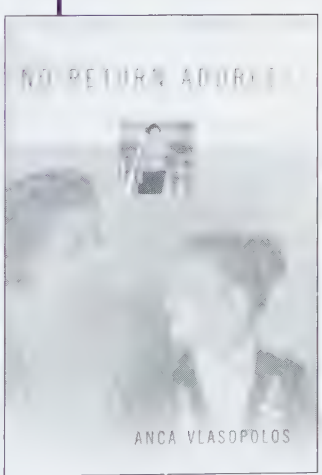
"She wasn't cursing at *you*, Jason," his mother said. "She was cursing at the *idea of you*."

I fear that Jason is in for a hard time. But it will still be better for him than it was for gay Jewish sons born ten years earlier.

Kids are coming out at a younger and younger age, "because they feel much safer," said Marvin R. Goldfried, a professor of psychology at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, who recently launched a network for psychologists with gay family members. Indeed, the subject of homosexuality is now right out there. Network television now airs prime-time shows with gay themes. School boards across the country, and some synagogues, are refusing to sponsor Boy Scout packs after last June's Supreme Court decision allowed the Boy Scouts of America, as a private organization, to exclude homosexuals. Still, I worry. As a Jewish mother, I'm keeping a close watch, even as my son David and I begin our search for the right college. I want all the usual good things, including a sizable Jewish presence. And one more thing: an active and visible community of gay and lesbian students, so that David can come into his own. I hope that he'll date. And that he'll find somebody Jewish.

A hyphenated life

No Return Address
A Memoir of Displacement
Anca Vlasopolos



From the director of Wayne State's comparative literature program comes this exquisitely crafted memoir of life in Communist Romania as the daughter of a Holocaust survivor and Greek political dissident—a remarkable evocation of the ambiguous identities assumed by displaced people everywhere.

"A beautifully written memoir, its stories and analyses woven seamlessly in prose that is both passionately and intellectually compelling." —Shirley Geok-lin Lim

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BREASTS

NOTES TOWARD A NEW CARTOGRAPHY

By Hanne Blank

Is it true that with smaller breasts less is known about us?

We dream new maps of ourselves, new landscapes. We inscribe new, more suitable borders on the places we have always lived.

The surgeon's fingers lift and separate. They reach in for a handful, resection, remove. When everything heals, what is left will be smaller, cooler, neater in the way that buds are neater than flowers. The fine white wake of the scalpel will be there forever, a reminder of the trade.

"I don't know," I say to a friend who is contemplating her second voluntary foray into plastic surgery. At sixteen she was given a brand new nose, a *goyische* nose, debumped, retrofitted to go with the rest of her *shayna punim*, the blonde hair, robin's-egg eyes, patrician brow. "I've been thinking lately that cosmetic surgery seems so Christian, all that pain and self-sacrifice on the theory that everything will be better the closer you can make yourself, or rather, the closer someone else can make you, to God's image." She wrinkles her manmade nose. "Though I suppose the image would depend on who you'd decided God was. Or maybe I'm just thinking too much."

"You're thinking too much," she sighs, irritated. Then she grabs her breasts through her shirt, lifting their round heaviness with both hands, showing me, the small-breasted friend, the evidence for her discontent. "Look, I'm just tired of looking like my mother, that's all. I'm only 28."

We get tired of looking like our mothers. We get tired of the roll, the drape, the weight of our flesh. Our breasts fill us out, round us, but never only where they're supposed to. They can't stay there, high, centered, firm, long enough. Gravity wins.

When they are more than a handful they round our backs sometimes, and our shoulders too. They tattle our blood and our hidden parts right through our clothes.

Coverage of Jewish women's health issues made possible in part by the Jewish Women's Foundation of New York.

Breasts are easier than genitals–easier to notice, easier to ogle, easier to comment upon, easier to co-opt. We learn early that they can be prey. We remember not so much being non-breasted but the moment when someone else made the sweet girl-meat of our bones a threat to us. There are words, snapped bra straps, glances, gossip, touches. I recall my own stranger in a crowded train, the single crude grab, the violated helpless milk of my furious tears.

Nu, what to make of it, these protuberances, these noses, this hair, these hips and butts, these breasts? We talk, another friend and I, about this article, about breasts. About her breasts.

It used to feel like my body was forcing me to be a stereotype. I felt so betrayed, so let down, when it became so obvious that I would grow up looking like a stereotypical Jewish girl. The tits, the hips, the dark hair, the mustache, the thick thighs and eyelids. Like an old picture of my great grandmother who always wore black and was always afraid, who never learned to speak English. I mean, I loved her, but she was kind of scary, you know?

What did you look like on the inside? To you? What did you expect, or hope for, when you looked in the mirror in the morning?

Brooke Shields. [laughs] In my dreams, hah. No, there were these girls in my high school, tall and straight-haired, athletic, tennis-playing types. In my diary I called them The Thoroughbreds. Total WASPs. Not one of them built like me. Flat-chested, long-limbed, like Seventeen models. They seemed so perfect. Popular and well-dressed and perfect.

What do you look like now, inside? To you?

Ah, I don't know. Like myself, mostly, I guess. Only taller, and a little less top-heavy. [laughs] A little sexier. But not so much that I couldn't fit in. That's the only thing I don't like about how I look, now. Sometimes I really just feel so obvious.

Do you still think you look Jewish?

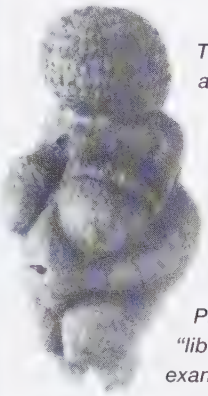
Hell, yes. Don't you think I do? Isn't that why you're talking to me about this?

And it is. But I cannot tell her how beautiful I think she is, how much I've always wanted to look like she does, how I have coveted the strong curving meat-and-blood sweeps of her body, the boldness of her hair and her hips. I don't want to impose that on her, don't want to make her feel any more obvious.

continued on page 22

PHOTO: WILLIAM CARTER

Did you know the Venus of Willendorf was Jewish?



The uneasiness that many Jewish women feel about their breasts did not spring up overnight, nor is it the result of an indigenous Jewish anxiety. Historically, the discourse on the Jewish women's body was marked by sexist and anti-Semitic ideas about science, culture, and female beauty. In his book Making the Body Beautiful: A Cultural History of Aesthetic Surgery *(Princeton University Press, 1999), University of Chicago professor of "liberal arts in human biology" Sander Gilman examines some of the insulting history:*

One of the most evident visual stereotypes of the Jewish woman was that of the heavy-set female — The expansive image of the Jewish woman's body had become a commonplace at the turn of the century. Hugo Obermaier (1877-1946), the Viennese archeologist who in 1908 discovered the "primitive" statue he labeled the "Venus of Willendorf," entered the following note into his diary about it: "A schematically degenerate figure — No face, only fat and feminine, prosperity, fertility, compare today's lazy/rotten [faule] Jewesses." This image served as the basis for the anxiety about the "primitive" Jewish woman's body.

To examine the origins of aesthetic breast reduction, one must understand that, like many of the other aesthetic procedures, the reduction of the pendulous breast came to have meaning within another system of representation, that of race. In the 1890's Ernst Brucke wrote about the specifically racial nature of the breast. For him, the "German" breast was a youthful, underdeveloped breast, smaller and more juvenile than the "Italian" breast. Thus breast form, as one can see in the almost fetishized popular and semi-popular cultural histories of the breast published by Brucke's contemporaries, came to represent images of idealized racial body types. Smaller breasts represented "Germanness," as opposed to large, pendulous breasts which were read as a sign of the primitive...

The breast functions as a racial sign even in the basic aesthetic surgical guides to breast reduction [c. 1930] "[which focused on] the difference between the breasts of Europeans and other racial types, including the pendulous breasts of Jewish women."

The cultural reading of breast reduction stressed the modernization (read: deracialization) of the woman's body. Big breasts are signs of the primitive. The advocates of surgical breast reduction in Weimar, Germany stressed that pendulous breasts are unaesthetic and encumbering. "Sporty women" do not want to have pendulous, lopsided breasts. Women who are "full of life, undertake sport, swim, and dance" want breast reductions so that they can "pass" as "modern." Truly elegant women with pendulous breasts suffer from "inferiority complexes." Sport and the sporty female body become an icon of the modern woman....

ANTI-SEMITISM AND MISOGYNY IN CLASSICAL BODY-TYPING

In the year between the middle of the seventh grade and the middle of the eighth grade, my breasts grew from an A to a D cup. At age 16, I had become, as my family called it, a boobsicle — just a skinny stick with very large breasts attached.

By the time I was 17, I felt the unadulterated hatred for my body that women aim only at themselves. No longer a boobsicle, I had fleshy thighs, a rounded belly and an even larger chest — a DD cup. Like many unhappy teenagers, I became desperate to alter myself physically. Dieting didn't work, especially because I used to turn to food to quell my depression. I set my sights upon a breast reduction.

One day in the early fall of 1989, when my mom was out of town, I made an appointment for a consultation with the doctor reputed to be The Boob Man in town. I don't recall exactly how I'd heard about Dr. Boob Man, but suffice it to say that young women in my predominantly Jewish, mid-western suburb know about area plastic surgeons the way Mormon women know about obstetricians in Provo.

I approached my mom with the news that I had seen the doctor without her knowledge, and she realized that I was serious. I said that I wanted a breast reduction to lighten my load, to be able to run, to play tennis without a ten pound weight bouncing on my torso. But mostly, as I told her, I hated how sexualized I felt by men who, almost universally, stared at my chest to the exclusion of my face. My boobs identified me and embarrassed me.

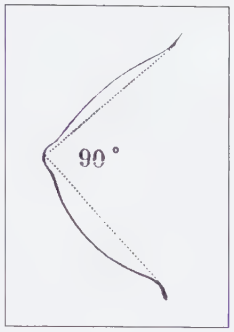
ROCHELLE RUBINSTEIN

WHO OWNS MY BREASTS?

Breasts are political as well as personal. Women are admired for them, ogled for them, and in many ways shamed by them. Here's why one woman decided to make hers smaller.

by Charlotte Wyman

There was also a Jewish dimension to my decision to make my breasts smaller, albeit a somewhat paradoxical consideration. It is not incidental that I disliked most of the Jewish women of my mother's generation in my community. The women in my hometown communicated that, for a woman, whom you married was of much greater import than who you were. From my vantage point, these women defied the stereotype of the *zaftig* Jewish woman; they seemed singularly concerned with working out and staying rail thin. I was conscious of the fact that I both disdained the ideal of a string-bean physique and sought to emulate it by diminishing my own size. I think I thought that getting a breast reduction would make me look not only thinner, but less womanly and less sexual — less marriagable."



The perfect female breast. (from Ernst Brücke, Schönheit und Fehler der menschlichen Gestalt, *Vienna: Braümuller, 1891), an illustration from* Making the Body Beautiful.

THE BOYS WORE BLACK ARMBANDS

the day I had my breasts reduced.

As it turned out, my breast reduction surgery still cast me in the role of sex object among my peers. Plastic surgery was not all that unusual in my high school; that is, a girl walking the school halls with post-rhinoplasty bandages wasn't an uncommon sight. Still, I expected some gossip if I came back to school after Thanksgiving vacation with noticeably smaller boobs. To protect myself, I didn't keep my impending surgery a secret. I quietly informed the guys and girls in my inner circle about the reduction, and told them I didn't want them to do a Paul Revere — THE SMALL BOOBS ARE COMING! THE SMALL BOOBS ARE COMING! But, if rumors about my breast reduction began to circulate, I told them, of they should discretely confirm. I thought that if I approached the surgery as though it were nothing to be embarrassed about, my peers wouldn't make a big fuss.

Wrong.

The night before I was to return to school as a cute little B cup, a casual guy friend called with a shocking question: Would I be angry at him if he wore a black arm band to school the next day, along with 30 or so other guys, to mourn the loss of my breasts? I told him that I would never forgive him. I was horrified.

When I got to school the next day, I saw six guys wearing black arm bands around their rugby shirts. I walked in a wake of whispers to the principal's office and entered without even knocking. I took a deep breath and blurted out the news before sheer humiliation had a chance to leave me voiceless. I was concise. "I had a breast reduction last week and x, y, and z are wearing arm bands to mourn the loss of my chest," I announced. I told him I wanted the arm bands removed immediately and that I wanted the guys disciplined even more quickly. I think the principal was more uncomfortable than I.

The consequences? The boys were disciplined, though not suspended. My senior class voted me "Most Likely To Sue For Sexual Harassment." My classmates found my behavior more objectionable than the guys'.

About eight years later, I wrote about my breast reduction for a women's magazine. I wrote mostly about how difficult athletics can be when you have big boobs, and how mine had made me feel insecure about my body when I was an adolescent. Even in that article, I failed to understand some of the emotional machinations at work. I didn't recognize that, deep down, I did — and do — worry that femininity is at odds with feminism.

Even post-reduction, I am a curvy woman. Every day I am conscious of my breasts: how they look, how they protrude, whether or not I can be proud of my shape and still be taken seriously. Just as I was sexualized by men when I was a teenager — the countless men who never once looked me in the eye — I feel just as sexualized by men today. I will not put my real name on this essay because, just as I didn't want to be known as the high-school girl with the big knockers, I am desperate not to be known as the writer with the tits and ass. The sad fact is, even after undergoing a breast reduction, I still wonder, is it the boobs or the woman attached?

That is the crux. From an early age, I felt my breasts were co-opted by men who stared at them shamelessly, grabbed at them, "accidentally" brushed against them — who mourned them after I had them reduced as if they had lost a piece of personal property. And though I now love my body and consider my breasts one of my favorite features, I wonder if self-assertion — or mutilation — played any role in my decision to have a breast reduction. Did I want to show the world, and myself, that I alone own my breasts and that I can do with them whatever I choose?

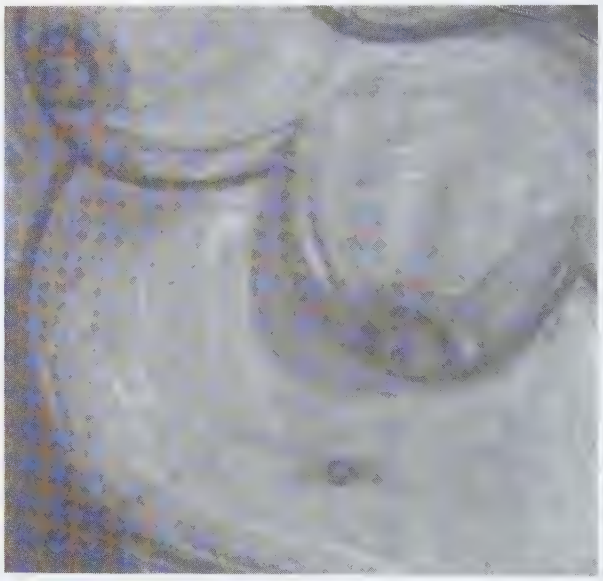
Charlotte Wyman is the pseudonym of a writer living in Manhattan.

continued from page 19

Secondary sexual characteristics. Body parts whose purpose is, at least in part, to indicate sex. To make it obvious. Not just male female, but sexual maturity—who is and isn't biologically ready to go. They stick out because they're designed to, because knowing the difference between the people who have them and the people who don't is important.

We're familiar with this sticking-out business, we are. We're Jews, and women. Our awareness of our own difference hangs in the air like perfume, the scent of difference, of diaspora, of *galut*. That state of making yourself at home in someone else's home is home. But we bloom where we're planted, within the boundaries and lines imposed by the territory where we land. We try not to stick out too much, remembering that stigma's sooty veil catches on things that stick out where they're not supposed to.

Still our curves insist upon fitting space to their own needs, dimpling, rippling the borders we have been assigned. One at a time the ripples are barely noticed, but ripples add to ripples already there, and soon our ripples are swells, even waves, and our waves are scarily real, rooted in mass, in weight, in meat made redder because of our red Jewish blood. Even though now most of us are sanitized, white, middle and upper-class, our ethnic bodies still pump that blood, still pass it on. We try, but our bodies have not yet—not all of them, anyway—learned how to be respectable White folk. It's embarrassing.



ELIZABETH TAMNIY

The erotics of the ethnic female body are fierce and fleshy, forced there by classism and racism and the way we associate the low and the ample. Abundant flesh, ample breasts, childbearing hips mean the vulgar, the low, the old-world and ignorant, an excessive flouting of the principle of rarefied renunciation whose ascetic aesthetic unites those who have enough privilege to look bounty in the face and turn it down. And so our typical bodies, our Jewish bodies, like African-American bodies, Hispanic bodies, are rarely seen as sexy. But they are definitely seen as sexual, fecund, the bells of all those stereotyped curves clanging a loud primal song, suggestive and raw. Ay mami', my yiddishe mamma, hey big mama, must be jelly 'cause jam don't shake like that.

When the wide white world imagines ethnic women's bodies, there is an overpowering smell of the uncontrollable sea and the rich dark earth, clouds of aroma that seem to block out the sight of Heaven, shatter the crystals of the ideal. The earthy actualities of being sexual are not sexy. Sexiness—the desirability of the idealized sexual—is a fragile confection of longing, yearning to transcend time, flesh, our own frailties. So white, so rich, so endless, so overwhelming in its pleasure, so streamlined, so slender, so graceful, so just-so; in this time and place it is also so young, so angular, so unrelated to reproduction, so gym-toned, so taut, so devoid of the unruly bulges that betray the unaccountable variability of being human.

Something about the map is wrong, we know, but we blame the land, not the map, not those who drew it. We are unable to stop these betrayals of body against ideal, of the land against the map. Bodies do what they will do. And we repent our helplessness over our flesh in bulky garments that hide our torsos and chests, in minimizer bras, in shoulders-forward posture, in gyms, under the surgeon's knife. We repudiate the parts that protrude, that snag that sooty fabric of difference and carry it helplessly along. We do not show off our breasts. Our mothers and grandmothers would have a fit. They know exactly what it is like to have our bodies. *Don't show it off. Don't be obvious. That sweater makes you look so top-heavy, you can't wear that, you look like a tramp. If you want to be taken seriously, you have to look like it.*

We subdue, we minimize, we conceal, we rearrange, subtract, slice off, hide. We do it to be safe, to make it more possible to be ogled on our own schedule if it must happen at all. We do it so as not to protrude, not to intrude, not to impose our ellipses and ovals and fine thick curves on the grid of other people's perceptions. We hide because the less is seen the more is left to imagine as ideal. We hide to shield ourselves from our ethnic bodies, to shield ourselves from the assumptions and comments those bodies collect, snagging on what protrudes, slowing us, threatening like undertow. We hide so that less is known and less is different, because a *kippah* under a baseball cap is still a *kippah* but you look much cooler and no one teases you or tries to rip it off your head. Assimilation is creamy with safety, more luscious than our breasts.

I imagine us dreaming new maps of ourselves, new landscapes. Insistently we will ravish the worlds we live in with our lushness, our wit, our capacity, our spirit. We will take lovers and put them gently between our breasts to warm them, to imbue them with our scent and the revelatory memory of our flesh like ramparts around them. We will inscribe our own new borders in the places we have always lived, and they will not be careful, parsimonious, or modest out of fear. We will draw them with the quill the scribe uses for *Bereshis bara Elohim*, and they will curve with the right, heavy abundance of sure dignity.

Hanne Blank is the author and editor of several books on sexuality and body image, including Zaftig: Well Rounded Erotica *(Cleis Press, Spring 2001). Current projects include a biography of busty, loudmouthed Jewish singer/comedienne Sophie Tucker, "the last of the red-hot mamas."*

One Woman's History of her BREASTS

Wily Boob Strikes Again!

by Sarah Blustain

The history of Boobs is the history of humiliation. Tell me it's not so. Tell me you welcomed their arrival, paraded them around, didn't slouch, hoped the boys would stare, were not surprised that the self you always thought you were was suddenly someone else. Tell me when you first became a sex object you were ready, or even understood what had happened.

It's a timeless chronicle that begins with a sneak-attack during a child's innocent rolling down a grassy hill. It's a story whose villain should not be confused with womanhood or motherhood or babes suckling at the breast, or with the rounding of flesh with weight or age. It's the protrusions I loathe, the arrogant glands, the awkward, floppy flaps. Boobs, as far as I can tell, are the enemy.

Maybe they bounce when they should stay still. Or maybe, as in our early teens, they simply start to grow. Their tactic is simple-minded and predictable, but difficult to defeat. They assert themselves at your most vulnerable moments—a new job, a first date, awkward adolescence. And then bang. The Boobs have taken another field.

Here's what they did to me.

Boob offensive #1: I'm in eighth grade when Debbie tells me she and another friend think I need a bra. She tells me with a sentence that starts "Don't you think ...??" I don't think, and I don't think anyone else should think. But I don't blame the messenger. I blame the Boobs.

Boob offensive #2: Caldor's, now bankrupt. Row after row of bras. Bras in boxes, unknowable; bras on hangers, too easily known; bras with lace, God help me. I sulk around in a sea of bras, guilty over this new expense, furious over this new humiliation. I won't let the lady help us. I won't play show-and-tell. Mom has already said aloud, "I don't know where you got them. Must be Grandma Rose." That's my father's side, the Eastern European, heavy-in-the-kugel side. She's not blaming anyone. On the other hand, we're not having a blossom party, either. I flee to the car while she pays.

Boob offensive #3: I'm going to visit a Reconstructionist synagogue with my mother. I'm trying some shoes with a little heel, and I've combed my hair. My vertical growth is basically done. We're walking down a Manhattan street and I realize that it's me the man is whistling at, not Mom. I pretty much want to kill him. Then I realize: I'm still the string bean I always was. Except for the Boobs.

Counteroffensive #1: Tired of these humiliations, I decide to take decisive action. My sister and I try the sports bra, which gives us a pretty good shot at unhanding the Boobs, or at least controlling them. But the Boobs are sly and return in an equally menacing guise. We call this counter-force the Uniboob.

Final counteroffensive: I enlist my mother. I tell her, in a moment of candor unusual for me, that I'm going to have them taken off. Chopped off, I probably say, trying to be funny. She's "funny" back. "Why don't you wait," she replies in a moment of candor unusual for her, "Let your husband enjoy them for a little while." Wily Boob appears to have an ally.

I know that by the time I reach my third decade, I'm supposed to embrace the Boobs. Love thy body as thyself. But public opinion notwithstanding, I'm not ready to end this war that was started by encroaching strangers. The best we've come to is an awkward peace: The Boobs have scaled back their sabotage tactics, and the most I am allowed in restraint is the modern miracle of the minimizer bra—a weapon of intimidation, if not of complete submission.

Lots of people war against their bodies, but those struggles grab more headlines. The transgendered man fights against his hips, his chest, his very genes. The anorexic turns against her "fat" though it means her own destruction. Psychologists call these wars body dysmorphia, and I guess I have a mild case: a sense that despite my resignation, I'd be more who I am if only I could get rid of the Boobs.

It's a real liberation fantasy. Nothing to be done but dream of the greatness I might achieve. Among my feats:

I would be a runner, a basketball-tosser, a frisbee player at neighborhood picnics;
I would be a woman of good posture;
I would wear slinky dresses with spaghetti-thin straps;
I would also wear tee-shirts fearlessly;
I would join this century's culture of womanhood, which praises solidity and self-containment—a sort of masculine stability—not Rubensesque fertility;
I would sit quietly in a chair, centered, contained;
I would roll down a grassy hill again.

The Anatomy

Jewish women worry along a continuum. On the right, real inheritors of trauma — pogroms, acute dislocations, the Holocaust — fairly vibrate with anxieties: misreading behaviors, attributing malevolence to neutral occurrences, adrenalizing ordinary, non-adrenal life. The language called "Not Worry" will always be our second one; we will never gain true fluency. Who opened this window? Did anyone touch this food? Who is that strange man? Even italics don't begin to convey our inner fibrillation.

In the middle of the continuum are the Queens of Prevention, as an overprotective friend of mine dubs herself. Traveling abroad? Here are the phone numbers of two infectious disease specialists. Flying? I happen to have this extra Zanax. It's snowing out? Nobody's driving home tonight; don't worry, we have sleeping bags. On the left of the continuum are Jewish women who are almost "normal" — whatever that means. Perhaps just a bit less reckless than our non-Jewish neighbors, we find Kennedyesque behaviors — daredevil skiing, drinking so much that you fall off the deck and break your teeth, Jeep racing on sand dunes, horseback riding in any manifestation — inconceivably stupid. Edgemanship? Now that's gratuitous! You enjoy the "high" of brinksmanship? Talk about privilege! Okay, so our kids are the only ones in the neighborhood who aren't allowed to sled down that hill that opens on to a trafficked street. "But everyone else does it, Ma." "Yeah, well, everyone else is clearly nuts."

Finally, there is the "nothing-to-fear-but-fear-itself" group who have it both ways: We worry about being worriers; and we worry about not being worriers. If worrying has become hardwired into our Jewish genes [souls] after generations of its being an adaptive survival skill, who are we to precipitously give it up? Maybe we should stockpile it; who knows? The next generation might need hidden diamonds to smuggle children into Mexico. This is not meshuga. *Something. Bad. Can. Always. Happen. LILITH receives an awful lot of manuscripts about this continuum of worry, and so we feel quite sure that worry IS a Jewish women's issue. What follows are the tales of three worriers: one whose worry turns to thoughts of sushi, one who understands she can give it up when a stunned hermit thrush flies out of her hand, and one who has internalized her independent, intelligent Grandma. Okay ... but what was that noise?*

Susan Schnur

by Jane Bernstein

# of Worry

I Lost My Daughter

This was at dusk, on our second day in California. We had decided to run and roller blade on the Strand, in Manhattan Beach, where we were staying. How innocently we set out. We had only a few days before I would leave her in Los Angeles and fly back East alone, and we had wanted to have fun. Neither of us was thinking about danger. We were on the beach, in the land of fun and sun! When it became obvious that, inexperienced as she was on her borrowed roller blades, she could skate far faster than I could run, I just announced, "If we lose each other, just go forward."

I had meant "momentarily lose sight of."

The flat, straight path curved away from the beach into a highly trafficked area in Hermosa Beach when I realized she was gone. The sky was beginning to darken. Not to worry, I thought, imagining that at any moment I would see her in the distance in her skimpy Spandex top, white shorts worn low on her hips. I would pick up speed to reach her, and when we were side by side, I would say, "Wow, I was worried for a second. We should have made better plans."

It was not her. For a while, as I ran forward (wasn't that what I had said, "Just go forward?") I kept seeing her in my imagination — white top, white shorts — kept replaying the same relieved conversation, "Wow, I was worried for a second." Though I tell her I am worried, my tone is lighthearted, because everything is fine.

I began to analyze my parting words to my daughter, to reassure myself that I had not said anything ambiguous. But racing through my head, like an indictment: No helmet, no money, no ID, no contingency plans, pretty, seventeen years old, if not naive, then still idealistic enough to believe that people are fundamentally good.

"Wow, I was worried for a second..." Even in my imagined relief my voice quavered.

As the sky grew duskier, my struggle to push back the panic increased.

It was as if above me were not stars, but dimming houselights. Scenes began to unfold. I could no longer see her skating toward me; could not hear myself say, in mock concern, "Wow, I was worried," but saw, despite my resolve and my silent self-instruction not to panic, a car going around the bend, the driver distracted, my daughter, my beautiful child...

The heart beat increases, breathing comes more rapidly.

I could not live without her, would not want to try. Would rather kill myself, but not by jumping, I couldn't jump. Pills could leave me brain damaged, I'd never do pills. Maybe a gun to the head, though no one I knew kept once stashed, and what would I say, like, hi, may I borrow your pistol?

Oh please, please, please...

Deep in the brain, the amygdala, regulator of the fight/flight response, senses danger, and sends off alarm signals to the prefrontal cortex.

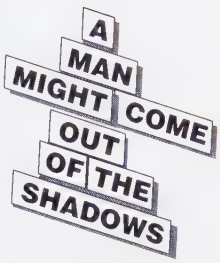
I ran forward, praying, making myself see her skating in the distance in her skimpy white garb, going through the scenario again:

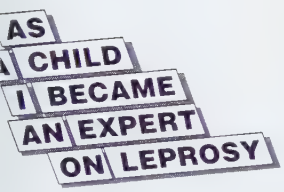
"Wow, I was worried for a second!"

She is barely concerned. Everything is fine!

Still running, I had made this up. My legs were tired. A lot of time had passed. Just go forward, I thought. Isn't that exactly what I had said? I could not start thinking I would never find her. Of course I would. "Wow, I was worried."

Everything is okay, I told myself, but the worry spread, like a drop of liquid on blotter paper.





The prefrontal cortex receives alarm signals from the amygdala, and starts to analyze the worry. Once the reverberating circuit between the two is created, it is very difficult to intercept.

Beautiful, beloved daughter, so vulnerable. Flesh, bone, beating heart.

I would not worry.

But now, in the midst of the unstoppable montage of images, I ran, remembering her as a baby, seven or so months old. Sitting but not yet pulling herself up or walking. She's on a freshly laundered blanket on top of the carpet. I am in the kitchen of our small apartment, no more than fifteen feet away. She is at that age where she has just attained the pincer grasp — thumb and forefinger together — and she has begun to pluck at things with her brand-new grasp — dust balls, lint.

I am grating cheese. I look at her, at the mound of cheese, at her. What happens next takes only an instant — I look up and barely see the sliver of glass clutched in that neat, new pincer grasp, her mouth opening wide.

What do you mean, you looked away?

There's no room for mistakes!

Ambulances, furious voices, full of righteous anger.

A man comes out of the shadows, grabs my daughter before she can resist, knocks her to the ground. She isn't even wearing a helmet.

Beautiful, seventeen, no money or ID.

You, of all people, let her go roller blading without a helmet?

Please, I thought. I'll do anything if she'll just be okay. But I knew that if — when — we met up, my worry would just begin.

I was leaving her in LA, flying home alone.

At seventeen? What kind of mother are you?

A worrier.

You're a worrier and you're letting your daughter live in LA alone? How is this possible?

History

When I was seventeen, my sister was murdered by a stranger. I could easily put forward the theory that this unspeakable event made me into a worrier. But it's fudging the facts. My sister's murder changed my life in many ways, but only proved what I knew as a young child: anything can happen.

Years before I knew from experience just how many varieties of misfortune existed. I was terrified by the pictures on pushkes, the little coin boxes for charities found on store counters everywhere. All of them had photos of people with diseases I worried I would catch, merely by staring at them.

The leprosy thing took my mind off all this. It started when I had stayed up to watch a TV program about UNICEF, hosted by Danny Kaye. He was my favorite comedian, with his bulging eyes and rubber limbs. Perhaps I thought it would be a musical comedy — Danny Kaye in Africa! By the time I saw people whose faces had been demolished by yaws, and lepers with missing digits, it was too late to turn back.

At nine, I became something of a lay expert on leprosy. I read whatever was available on the subject, and, surprisingly, there was plenty. My favorite book at the time was a memoir called Miracle at Carville, set in Louisiana, at the only leprosarium in the United States. (I also liked Out on a Limb, about a girl who'd had her leg amputated.) "Liked" is not exactly accurate: I read and reread them, the way I later read widely about the persistent, residual, life-altering deficits caused by even mild brain damage. Although it's true that knowledge can often ameliorate worry, expert worriers know how to use knowledge to feed the worry.

Thus, I knew that leprosy, or Hansen's Disease, was caused by a bacterium, that Sulfa drugs were effective, and that the disease was not highly contagious. I knew that its incidence in temperate climates was exceedingly rare, and then almost exclusively occurring in immigrants from tropical or subtropical countries. I was well aware that as a Brooklyn-born girl who had never traveled south of Maryland, my chance of getting leprosy was just about negligible. But — well-versed in the worrier's creed — not impossible.

You never knew. Anything could happen.

(continued on page 40)

Always Buy Gold

by Ellen R. Portnoy

Always buy solid gold, not the hollow stuff," my grandma told me. "Always solid. Always buy diamonds. Diamonds are good. You can sew them in your clothes."

I was the oldest granddaughter. My grandmother and I spent many hours together, shopping and talking. I learned my grandma's brand of survival.

"Keep silver coins," she told me. "You never know when you will need them. Real silver is better."

When grandma died we found every purse she ever owned filled with silver dollars, half dollars and quarters. Over 30 purses, hundreds of silver coins. We checked every coat pocket, every pants pocket, every dress pocket, every drawer. We continued to find money two years after she died. I carry, in my wallet, one $10.00 bill I found, for an emergency that still has not occurred. Grandma has been dead for 19 years.

Should I worry?

At 16, grandma came by herself to the United States from Poland. It was 1922. She had already lost her mother and younger sister. Behind she left her father, two brothers and another sister, her friends and cousins. It did not matter. She was leaving Poland!

At 16, grandma moved into her aunt's apartment in New York City. She had to do the housework. She had to work outside the home for an income. She went to night school to learn English. She spoke and wrote several languages: English, Polish, Yiddish, Hebrew and German.

At 18, she met her husband. Her aunt did not approve and wrote to Europe demanding my great-grandfather end the match. The aunt wanted her to marry a different man. In Europe, my great grandfather checked out grandma's choice and found him to be from a good, pious family. So my grandparents wed.

Grandpa worked. He was a baker. His breads, rolls, crumb buns and chocolate cookies were without compare. I can still close my eyes and see the bakery and smell the warm scents of the ovens. I see the laugh crinkles around my grandpa's eyes, and the quick smile on my grandma's face.

I learned my grandma's brand of survival.

Grandma worked. She sold the bread. Kept all the silver coins that came into the store and played the stock market. She put away quite a bit of money. But it was never enough. You never know when they might go after the Jews.

Always buy diamonds. You can sew them in your clothes.

The pantry was always filled to overload with nonperishable foods. In the basement, behind a certain beam, hidden in dirt, were buried bags of money and jewelry.

"You can always bribe your way out with diamonds. Diamonds are best," she told me. "Emeralds and rubies are good, too. Always get jewelry that can be taken apart."

Diamond rings, diamond watches, diamond necklaces, diamond earrings. So much jewelry, she could not wear it all. She did not wear it all. These jewels were not for show, they were security — a way to escape, to save her family.

I keep mine in the bank vault. I rarely wear diamonds or emeralds or rubies. The jewelry from her is kept safe. But, I do not keep it buried in the basement.

I am not afraid. Or so I think. Every once in a while I get this urge to bring it all home. To hide it. To feel her feeling of security. I wonder, will I ever need these to save my family? In the vault, the jewels will not help. Should I be like grandma? Should I worry?

This mentality, she left as my gift. This feeling sometimes of dread, unknown fear. I've never been to Poland. I was born in New Jersey. I should have no fears. But then, every once in a while I hear grandma's voice.

"They hid me in the basement. It was dark," she told me. "I had to get out of Poland. And I did." Later she saved her father and sister from the Holocaust by bringing them to the United States in 1936.

Now, 78 years after grandma left Poland, 19 years since she died, I still see her. A young girl with long brown braids. A wealthy woman with jewels and secure place in life. A mother and grandmother. An independent, intelligent woman. A scared soul always ready for escape.

Ellen Rosenberg Portnoy, of Overland Park, Kansas, says her childhood was enriched by her close contact with her grandmothers, Thelma "Tova" Szenk Amsterdam and Esther Goldman Rosenberg.

Looking Away

By Sharon Levy

When my sister Paula got sick, I focused on her with the intensity I'd give a rare and lovely beast. I've always suspected that the essential things were the ones that happened while I looked the other way. When I knew I could be losing Paula, I didn't want to let any moment with her escape me.

I had the same feeling I've had when I'm close to something beautiful and wild. I focus as hard as I can. But even when an owl is calmly inspecting me from three feet away, or a black bear strolls right past me in a mountain meadow, I can feel something precious slipping away. I am distracted by mosquitoes and muscle aches. I fail to take in all of the gifts that come my way.

When Paula's hair grew back in after the chemotherapy it was curly (it had always been straight before) and incredibly soft. I had trouble keeping my hands off this post-chemo hair of hers. Her doctors said the chemo had worked; for a short while she seemed to be OK. Then everything went terribly wrong. There was a second cancer in her liver. They tried to remove the disease by surgery, but it was too late. The cancer had got away, spread into her abdominal wall, and there was nothing they could do.

We had grown up together in a loving, oddly paranoid family. My grandparents were Russian Jews who had fled to America to escape the pogroms. They arrived here when they were young, still in their twenties, but spent the rest of their lives on alert, expecting disaster at any moment. My mother and father were both born in Chicago, but this wariness had filtered down to them. They seemed to worry about nearly everything we did: driving in traffic, riding the subway, breathing when the pollen count was high.

Paula was the oldest and inherited many of the fears and quirks my brother and I longed to escape. She was born generous, so she didn't try to stop us from doing what we wanted. Instead she expressed the family fear of everyday hazards by praising us lavishly for minor accomplishments like parking a car or drilling a bolt hole.

She expressed the family fear of everyday hazards by praising us lavishly for minor accomplishments, like parking a car.

We grew up in a loving, oddly paranoid family. Oh yes...my grandparents had fled to America to escape the pogroms.

She somehow skipped the whole process of adolescent rebellion. She stayed with our parents while she went to college, at the university a few blocks away. She was slow to take risks, and quick to take responsibility. She spent a lot of time helping to care for our grandparents as they grew older, sicker, and more irascible.

I used to wish she'd cut loose a little more, think of other people less, move a little closer to the edge. What I wanted most then was to break free of all the fears my parents had for me. Sometimes Paula would annoy me when she echoed those

They worried about everything we did: driving in traffic, breathing when the pollen count was high.

fears. I thought because she stayed close to home, because she played it safe, that she was looking away from life. I was wrong.

My sister went into a hospice ward on her 43rd birthday, and it was there she spent the last two weeks of her life. It was a grim place, but Paula's room was always full of people — friends flew in from all over the country to see her — and a lot of the time they were laughing. It dawned on me that anyone who was loved as well as she was must have a strong grip on what life is about. Her body had all but quit, but she was more herself than ever. She was kind and gracious and funny. The pain meds seemed to make her just foggy enough to cut wilder quips than she had before.

Late at night, when she was restless and couldn't sleep, I'd climb in the hospital bed with her and we'd talk. Sometimes it was wild, free-association gibberish, a dance of memory choreographed by all the pain killers. But a lot of it was very matter-of-fact. We talked about her death, a prospect which filled me with panic, but which Paula faced calmly. Paula's leave-taking at the hospice was the same as our many goodbyes at bus stations and airports. She was happy to be with me, glad to talk together for as much time as we had, and peaceful about going her own way when the time came.

On the last night of Paula's life, she lay in a coma. Her lungs were full of fluid, and each breath she took made a loud rattling sound. She'd lost consciousness the night before, while all the immediate family were away from her room. I sat with her a while, with her husband and my brother and Paula's friends. Then I went out of the room to listen to a tape I'd made of Paula talking. I was desperate to hear her voice. And in those few minutes, while I looked away, Paula's death came. By the time I returned the noisy gasping had stopped, and she was gone.

People tell me I can talk to Paula anytime. I'm not sure I believe in an afterlife. Still, since she died Paula has come into my dreams with incredible vividness. In those dreams she seemed so much herself, and when she touched me, I felt it in my body and not in my mind.

If there is an afterlife, it's hard to imagine that the people there are interested in the everyday distress of us mortals. If Paula is in the great beyond, would she be interested in the discovery that grief constipates me or the fact that my house is always a mess? In the face of pain and death, Paula seized her life by relaxing her grip. After showing me this, would she have patience for my eternal worry that I am looking away at all the wrong times?

This morning as I sat typing at my computer, a hermit thrush flew into the office window, right in front of my face. I watched the stunned bird sink down through the bushes. I grabbed the only box handy, an empty twelve-pack of Weinhard's Beer, and ran outside. The thrush lay in a heap under the bushes. In my hand, he was much smaller than I expected.

I laid the bird in the Weinhard's box and put the box on my filing cabinet and went back to work. He revived in less than an hour — burst out of the beer box and flew several circles around the room — then bounced off a window and came to rest on the sill.

I cupped him gently in both hands and headed outside, hoping the second impact hadn't stunned him again. I stood on the front walk in the sunshine and opened my palm, but the thrush just lay there. The sun hit his head and highlighted some of the downy feathers that had been knocked loose when he fought his way out of the box.

After a while he found his feet, and stood on my hand instead of laying there. I watched him, and I watched myself holding a wild bird in my hand, and I was thrilled by it.

Then I turned my head away, just for a moment, distracted by a noise in my neighbor's yard. In that moment the bird flew, for an instant doubling his small weight in my hand as he pushed off. He flew straight, he avoided the power lines and tree branches, he went beyond my vision, and left me giddy in my front yard.

When the thrush and I parted ways, for a moment I felt purely happy. I went back inside my house, where the neighbors wouldn't need to wonder about me celebrating alone in the front yard, and I laughed aloud.

It was later that I cried. Because even though I glanced away, I can remember well the feeling of the thrush launching, that moment of weightiness before he flew. But when I remember that moment, I don't see a small bird crouching in my hand. I don't see the oak tree in my yard or the blue sky behind it. What I see is my sister's face, in the moment before she turns to leave me behind. ■

Sharon Levy is a freelance writer based in northern California. She is a regular contributor to National Wildlife, New Scientist, *and other science magazines.*

I turned my head away, just for a moment, distracted by a noise in my neighbor's yard.

New fiction from the author of ***Bee Season.***

In Every Girl's Heart

by

Myla Goldberg

"Barrie Day Camp has many kids. Many kids have Barrie Day Camp. I am one of them, and so are you, so let's all have a good day." — Camp Song

They stand in a circle wearing horrible shirts with the sun shining down. They are red-faced children with shirts the color of traffic cones and sharpened stones for eyes. It is already 90 degrees and it is Horse Day for Bluebirds (Age group 10-12, space is limited so register your daughter today!).

Their counselors lead them in song.

"Let me hear your camp spirit!" Cora, a red-haired counselor, has so many freckles it looks like a disease. "Marsha. I can't hear you."

Marsha is making the right shapes with her lips but no noise is coming out. The group with the most spirit gets ice cream after lunch.

"Sing," hisses a Bluebird between verses. Marsha sings.

The horses (Remember to include the riding fee with your application if you want your daughter to participate in this extra-special activity!) are kept in a stable at the edge of the camp. The counselors pick the Sunflower Girls (Age group 8-9, please indicate if you wish for your daughter to participate in the end-of-summer sleep-over!) as the spirit winners. It is the fourth time in a row the Bluebirds will not get ice cream.

"Bluebirds, line up." Cora is their leader. Every lunch, she sneaks to the boat house (Only campers with a white or red swimband allowed!) to meet her boyfriend. Her freckles don't stop at her neck.

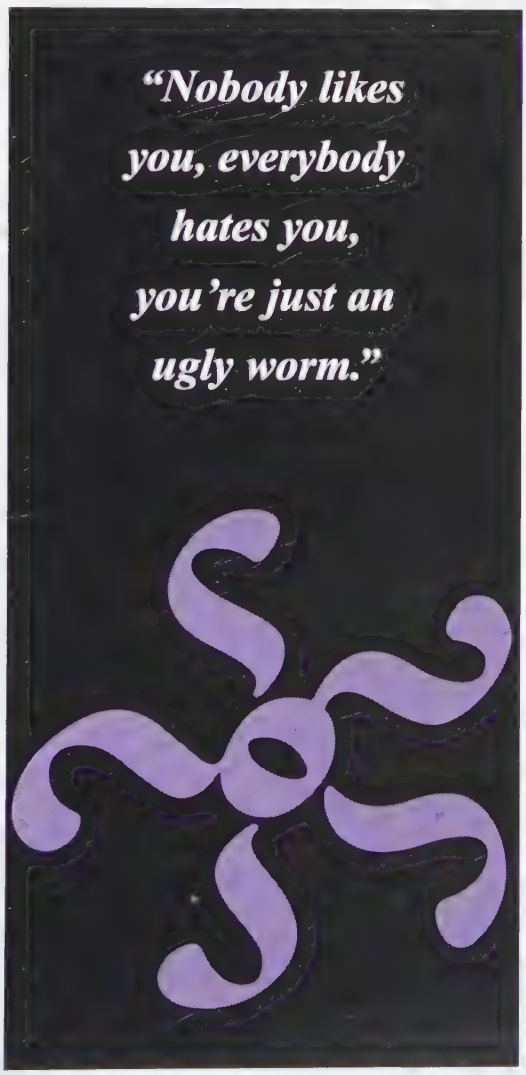
"The Sunflower Girls keep getting the best of us." Cora's smile is widest when she is annoyed. "I'm going to start feeding you worms if you Bluebirds can't chirp loud enough." Her mouth is a hive of small, uneven teeth. "Let's sing the Worm Song on our way to the horsies."

They walk in groups of three and four, swinging their arms to stir the still air. "It's Marsha's song," one Bluebird whose name is Heather whispers to another, whose name is Jennifer. They trail Marsha, clipping the backs of Marsha's shoes as she walks. They sing a special version of the Worm Song just loud enough for Marsha to hear.

"Nobody likes you, everybody hates you, you're just an ugly worm."

Marsha's heels smack against her flattened sneakers as she walks, flip-flop flip-flop, the sound of Granny's slippers. Marsha is pretty sure Granny stopped recognizing her. "Who is this darling child? I'd like to give her a big kiss," every time Marsha was made to visit. The toothless mouth opening and closing.

On the first day of camp (Don't forget to dress your daughter in a camp T-shirt!) everyone was told to decorate their name tag according to the name of their group. Marsha drew musical notes around hers (HELLO!! My name is Marsha!), turning the s's into treble clefs.



"What're those supposed to be?" Heather had asked, poking her finger into Marsha's chest. Heather has impossibly small lips the color of cherry chewing gum. Her barrettes and socks always match her shorts.

"It's birdsong. Since we're Bluebirds."

Cora had called Marsha "creative" in front of the whole group. After the first week of camp, Heather had passed out invitations to a pool party in her backyard. One Bluebird was not invited.

There is a changing room next to the stable (Do not enter unless you're dressed to ride!) where the Bluebirds change together. Marsha tries to hide the sweat that has turned her T-shirt a darker orange under her arms.

Marsha doesn't wear a training bra like the others. Her mother thinks it inappropriate for a girl her age. Before Granny was sent away, she would feed Marsha milkshakes with raw egg and, later, whole sticks of butter. "You're a twig. Better drink this if you want boobies." Marsha's mother assures her that she will one day be thankful for the high metabolism that keeps her so thin.

"Worm." The word echoes through the room, the heat melting its source.

Marsha has a raised mole the size of a corn kernel just below her clavicle. She keeps her back to the other birds. Heather's training bra has a pink flower in the middle. She likes to walk around in it when she holds butt inspection. Her bellybutton is a perfect inney.

"Get ready, Bluebirds! It's tush time!"

Heather demands the full participation (Our wide array of camp activities build fitness and social skills!) of her fellow campers. From under the Bluebirds' shorts emerges a flock of cotton panties the colors of the pastel rainbow. Jennifer spreads her legs and pushes her butt out like a model for designer jeans. Despite the small fan in the corner (All facilities are climate-controlled for camper-comfort!) the room stinks of yesterday's sweat.

"Remember girls, stick out your ass to go to the head of the class! Even a little one can go a long way," Heather sings, passing each bird from behind. "That means you too, Marshmouth. Oh, I forgot, worms don't have butts, do they?"

All the Bluebirds, even the shy ones, twitter. Marsha focuses on the tree outside the window, tries to think herself to a branch higher than Heather can reach. Through the window of Granny's room there was only a creek with thick, brown water.

"What's wrong? Don't you know how to talk?"

Marsha's head moves up and down.

Heather puts her mouth close to Marsha's ear. She whispers loud enough for everyone to hear her. "Do worms have butts? Yes or no?" Heather's breath smells like peanut butter.

"No," Marsha whispers.

"Then how'd you get chocolate stains on your underwear?"

Sound bounces off the concrete walls and floor until it is the whole world. Marsha smells the metallic stink of shame from her armpits. When Cora comes in, her birds are dressed and ready.

In the stable (Horses hold a special place in every girl's heart!), the flies have grown too fat to fly. The heat makes Marsha's clothes (Jeans and a long-sleeved shirt are absolutely necessary!) feel heavier. Marsha's horse that day is white with brown spots.

Marsha focuses on one tree outside the window, tries to think herself to a branch higher than Heather can reach.

"My undies are clean," she says to no one in particular.

The horse's name is Lightning. Its mane and tail are yellow-white like Granny's hair. When it breathes, the air rushes too loudly through its nose. Marsha doesn't like leading the horse into the sun, doesn't like being near its large yellow teeth.

Outside the stable, the dark spots on the horse's coat seem to spread like creeping stains. Marsha is afraid to touch them in case they are contagious like warts. When the horse moves, its bones make lumps ripple beneath its skin. Granny had a bump on the side of her neck that no one talked about. She would stroke it with her fingers until Marsha's mom would pull Granny's hand away. Marsha is short for her age. To get onto the horse, she needs extra help.

Most of the Bluebirds came to camp knowing how to canter. Marsha slows the riding class (All experience levels welcome!) down. She has a difficult time remembering that kicking with the left heel means turn right and that the right heel means turn left.

Heat jellies the air Marsha breathes. In it, she can see specks of dust and hairs loosened from the horse's neck. She can see fly eggs and horse spittle. Heat melts the difference between the horse and Marsha's leg. Underneath her jeans, she feels rough hairs sprouting. By the time Marsha returns to the changing room, she will be white with chocolate stains. The thought closes around her like a scab.

"Marsha!" The voice of Graham (Our professional riding instructor knows children as well as he knows horses!) cuts through her thickening skin. "Why aren't you moving? Get your butt in gear. I know Lightning's ready for a ride."

"I have to get down. I can't ride today. Please let me get down."

Graham turns his horse around. Heather and the other Bluebirds stare. Heat blurs the lines of their faces. Heather's mouth shimmers small and red.

"Why do you even come here?" Graham leads Marsha from the ring. He wrenches Marsha's arm lifting her off the horse, then tethers Lightning to a post beside the stable.

Marsha watches the Bluebirds ride (Good horsemanship is something a girl can take pride in!) as if their bodies have been made for it. Beside her, Lightning snorts. The smell of fresh horse droppings amplifies the buzzing of the flies.

Inside the changing room, the air feels cool on Marsha's skin. Marsha looks for Heather's cubby. Today Heather's barrettes and socks are lemon yellow. Marsha finds a hard candy in the pocket of Heather's shorts and eats it even though it is unwrapped. She leaves with the shorts stuffed under her shirt.

Marsha stands beside Lightning (Be a careful Bluebird: never approach a horse from behind!), patting its side before reaching behind its legs. As Marsha rubs the shorts in the dung, she tells herself it is like twisting the top off an Oreo, the same feeling of give and slide as the cookie comes free from its creamy center.

"Horse patties," Marsha whispers, and giggles.

Lightning shifts. Its hoof comes down on Marsha's shoe. The horse's hooves are thick and yellow like Granny's fingernails. The initial burst of pain becomes a dull throb.

"Let go," Marsha says. Marsha pictures the ground softening in the day's heat, the weight of the horse forcing her into the earth. Granny always worried she'd be buried before she died.

Heather's shorts are heavy in Marsha's hand. "Letgoletgoletgo." Lightning's tail swats slow flies. The Bluebirds (We try to make our youngest campers feel especially welcome!) are rounding the turn that leads back to the stable. Marsha shoves the horse with her free hand. She pounds it with her fist. Its pelt feels like little needles. She pounds between its spots.

Heather is at the front of the group. Marsha slams her shoulder into the horse, turning to avoid seeing herself touch its brown fur. Granny is behind Marsha's eyelids. "Little girl," Granny wheezes, "let me touch your face." Whenever it was time to leave, Granny would squeeze Marsha's hand and not let go.

The Bluebirds draw nearer, clip-clop clip-clop.

Marsha begins to plead. "Let me go. Please. I'll kiss you this time." Marsha presses her mouth to the horse. Its hairs prick her lips.

Flies settle on the shorts in Marsha's hand. The Bluebirds see brown and lemon yellow. Their horses are breathing fast from being ridden in such heat. Their sides rise and fall, rise and fall.

Heather's face turns the color of cherry chewing gum. Her lips stretch and stretch. Graham begins to yell, but Marsha doesn't hear him. Heather's eyes are sharpened flint.

Rising temperatures are setting records up and down the eastern seaboard. Summer has just begun.

Myla Goldberg is a writer living in Brooklyn. Her first novel, Bee Season, *published last year by Doubleday, was named a New York Times Notable Book for 2000. It will appear in paperback this spring.*

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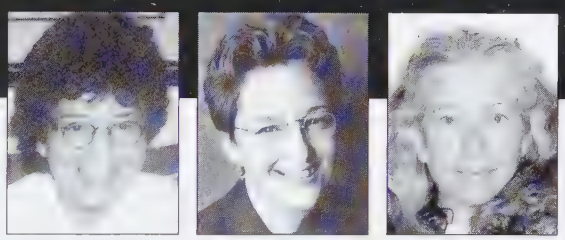

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book

Mothers, Daughters, Feminists: Spring Books Look at Complex Relationships

The Wholeness of a Broken Heart

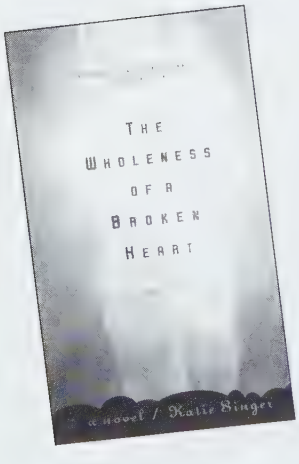
by Katie Singer
Penguin Putnam, $14

Are some rifts between mothers and daughters too deep to heal?

In her compelling new novel, Katie Singer introduces us to writer/poet/teacher Hannah Fried. We follow Hannah through much of her twenties, first in Ann Arbor, and then for several years in Boston. Hannah successfully teaches at a woman's creative writing center. A bit of a loner, she concentrates on her art and her work. As the novel unfolds we gain insights into Hannah's major dilemma: her struggle to understand why, inexplicably, Hannah's mother Celia has consciously chosen to estrange herself from her daughter. Whether Hannah and Celia will be able to resolve the breach in their relationship is the engine driving this novel's formidable energy. An early chapter—about an abortion in the 1920's—first appeared in LILITH.

Though set in the contemporary world, Singer brings the past alive as she intersperses chapters that are devoted to Hannah with the voices not only of Hannah's mother, and maternal grandmother, but also her maternal great-grandmothers, and other key figures from the past. Singer does this with great simplicity; we are effortlessly transported to the Yiddish speaking worlds of Eastern Europe at the end of the 19th century, early 20th century New York and Cleveland, as well as Europe and America during the Holocaust. Throughout the book, many characters revert to Yiddish to express their inner thoughts. Indeed the title of the book is based on the Yiddish proverb: *Es iz nito a gantsere zakh vi a tsebrokhn harts* — There's nothing more whole than a broken heart.

Singer addresses a variety of difficult social and familial issues with extraordinary sensitivity. These include child molestation; suicide; abortion; the effects of divorce; sexual abuse during the Holocaust; serious family estrangement; and a loveless marriage which continues because, as was the case until recent times, divorce was unfeasible economically for a woman, and especially a woman with children.



Hannah Fried, though not without flaws, is perceptive, bright and articulate. Her affection for, and warm relationship with her aging grandmother, Ida, is touching and mutual. At one point Ida tells Hannah: "Move on...you've spent enough time trying to change this situation... and it hasn't changed. So, maybe it's time to accept it. *Lekh lekha*, Hannah... Go to yourself." It is sage advice.

Singer expertly relates the stories of these multiple generations. And while much of the action takes place between women, the male voices also ring true. This superb tale of estrangement, love, and the triumph of goodness breaks our hearts and then makes them whole again.

— *David Zucker*

Rememberings: The World of a Russian-Jewish Woman in the Nineteenth Century

Pauline Wengeroff
Translated by Henny Wenkart, edited by Bernard D. Cooperman
The University Press of Maryland, $18

In the introduction to this vivid, engrossing memoir, Pauline Epstein Wengeroff modestly writes, "I ask the readers for their indulgence. I am not an author nor do I wish to appear as such. Think of this work as the writings of an old woman who, in the quiet twilight of her life, simply tells about the eventful times through which she lived." But Wengeroff does herself a disservice: her richly detailed and lovingly evoked account of her childhood in Lithuania, her marriage and ensuing life as a wife and mother, offers readers an abundance of writerly observations and gifts. Here is her description of helping the *rebbetzin*: "Sometimes I rocked the baby...sometimes I floured the paddle with which the *rebbetzin* pushed the loaves of bread into the oven, sometimes I found the egg...If the egg was still warm, I loved to rub it across my eyes."

Born in Lithuania in 1833, Wengeroff was part of the pivotal, transition generation, one that brought the Jews of Eastern European into the modern world. She herself spoke several languages and

read German poetry in her youth; with her banker husband and their children, she lived in such cosmopolitan cities as St. Petersburg and Minsk. Yet her account of the changes she witnessed is laced with longing and regret. When she is forced by her husband to give up her kosher kitchen and her wig, she writes that she had to "...gradually drive the old beautiful customs out of my house. No, I did not drive them out. I accompanied each one to the outermost portals of my home, sobbing and weeping. My heart bled as I watched them leave..."

Her memoir, then, assumes a deeper meaning, for embedded in it is a plaintive call to action. Grieved by the fact that her own children have discarded the religious life she held so dear, she attempts to describe — and therefore preserve — that life for her grandchildren. There is a hope, a wish, expressed in all these pages and that wish is abundantly clear: *come back* is its mournful cry, *come back*.

Wengeroff also describes the changing fortunes she and her family experienced due to events beyond their control: the Crimean War, Imperial edicts and cholera epidemics all take their toll on Wengeroff's sense of peace and security. Still, she emerges from these pages shrewd and insightful, about both her own situation and that of the Jews around her. Henny Wenkart's accessible translation, along with the wealth of supplemental materials — photographs, family tree, glossary and cogent afterward by Bernard D. Cooperman — give even fuller dimension to this fierce, vibrant woman. Along with the newly popular *Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln* (which chronicles the life of an independent German Jewish woman in an earlier time), Pauline Wengeroff's touching story deserves an honored place on our bookshelves.

—Yona Zeldis McDonough

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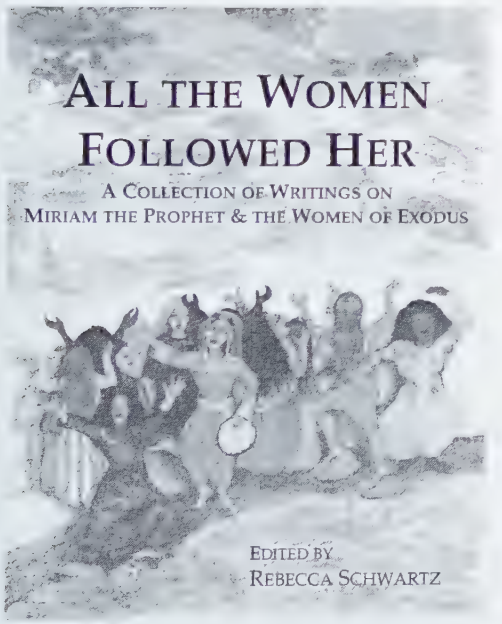
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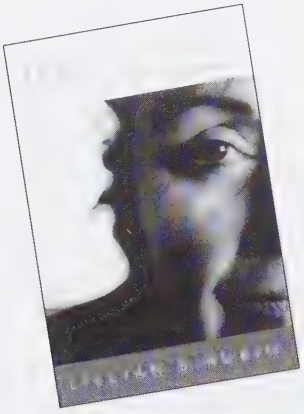


Tangled Lives: Daughters, Mothers, and the Crucible of Aging

by Lillian B. Rubin
Beacon Press, $23

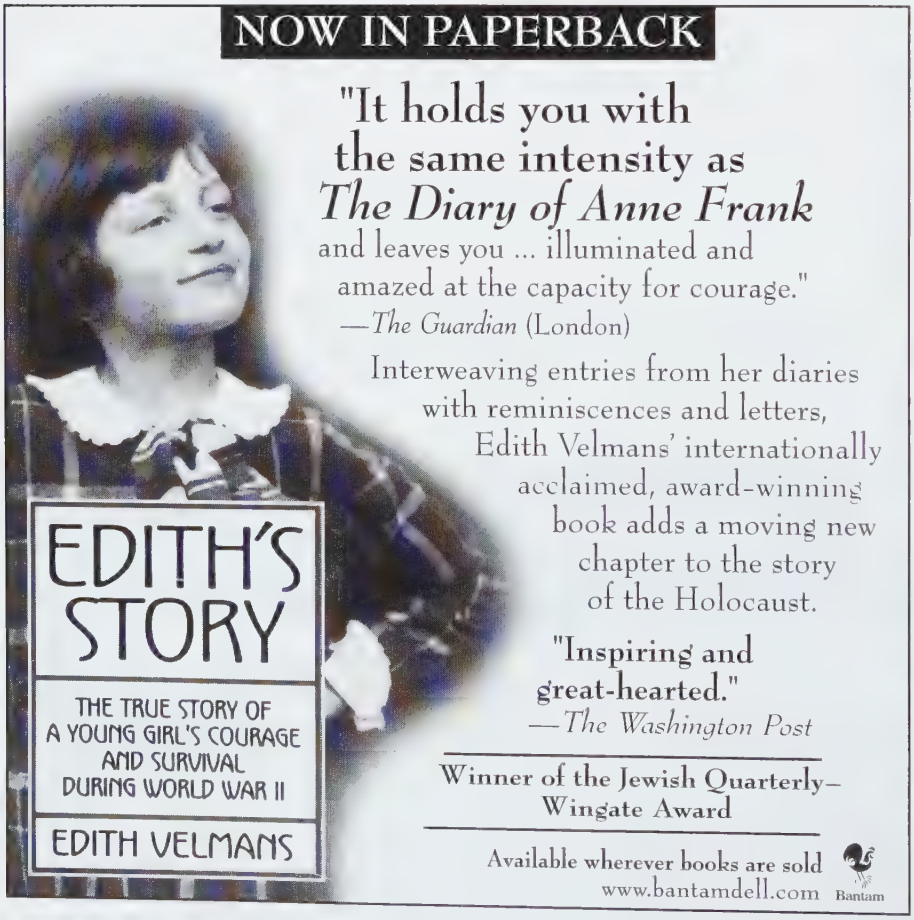
If the word young is equated with being healthy and attractive, then the word old becomes, almost by necessity, associated with illness and rejection. Growing into an old woman is a challenging task. Nearing the final stage of life in a youth worshiping culture, many women find it painful to give up the self image of being and feeling young.

Lillian Rubin, sociologist, psychotherapist and writer, candidly explores her own aging process. Hers in an intimate portrait, an introspective account of the author's inner life, replete with dreams, childhood flashbacks and the poignant moments of the two years preceding her 75th birthday. She untangles and uncovers the deep connections between the present and the past, between early trauma and age-related anxiety.

Confronted with her aging mother's dementia and subsequent death in a Florida nursing home, the author is prompted to examine the painful history of their unpleasant relationship. Born ten months after her parents and older brother arrived in this country from Kiev, Lillian grew up in excruciating poverty. Her father died when she was five; her mother, unskilled, illiterate and bitterly angry, managed to keep the family alive but not without constant rejections and deprivations. She favored her son and often threatened both children with placement in an orphanage.

Unlike so many mother-blaming accounts written by aging daughters, Ms. Rubin does not just offer a recital of the very real injuries inflicted by her mother. Instead, she goes further in trying to understand and explain the conditions of her mother's life that might have contributed to such faulty mothering. She takes us into the exhausting, demeaning, and inhumane working conditions inflicted on her mother as a garment worker and the indignities of the pre-welfare, pre-labor working force.

In contrast, the author depicts a near perfect relationship with her own daughter, her husband, and her numerous close friends. Her journey into old age is indeed cushioned by their love and support. Ms. Rubin narrowly misses the two pitfalls of vilifying her mother and idealizing her spouse and daughter, but finally her portraits are multi-dimen-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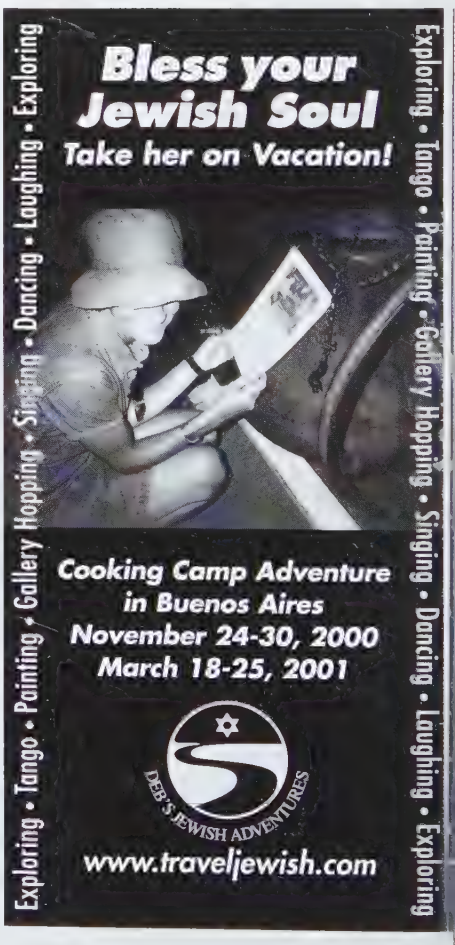
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sional and more complex.

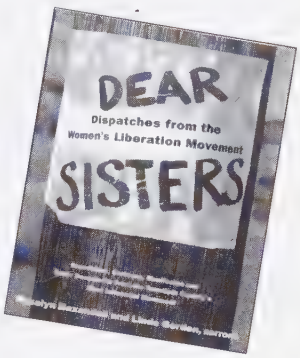
Shortly after her mother's death, Lillian survives a close brush with her own mortality. The fear of old age permeates the author's days and nights as she recovers from a pulmonary embolism. Her approaching 75th birthday looms as a symbol of her own ambivalence and her anxiety about the uncertainties of old age. Moving back and forth between childhood and old age, Ms. Rubin examines the inner and outer forces that caused or permitted her to move out of the ignorance and poverty of her surroundings, to educate herself and to create a full and productive life. During her recovery, she puts the final touches on *The Transcendent Child*, a book about children who have achieved success by being able to cut themselves off from the paralyzing circumstances of their childhoods. She sees herself as such a child.

This reviewer would have welcomed some acknowledgment of the fact that this book does not intend to cover the field of aging mothers and daughters, as the title implies. It does not speak for the large number of aging women who have had close and loving relationships with their own mothers or those who have less satisfying encounters with their children or their spouses, nor does it address the broad range of possible responses to one's own aging. Still, *Tangled Lives* is a moving and engrossing account of one woman's rich and complicated adjustment to late life. Its strength lies in the particulars of a deeply examined life, in the depth and uniqueness of the author's own story. Some aspects of this experience will reverberate with other women's late life journeys; some will accentuate their differences.

Rachel Josefowitz Siegel

Dear Sisters
Dispatches from the Women's Liberation Movement

Rosalyn Baxandall and Linda Gordon, editors
Basic Books, $30



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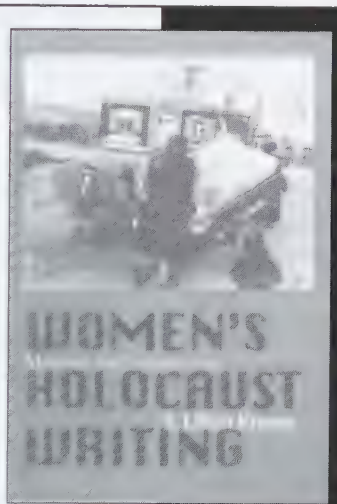

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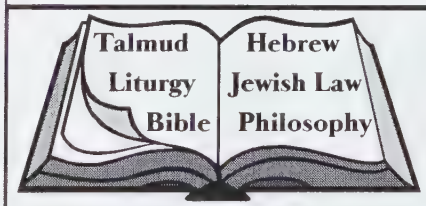

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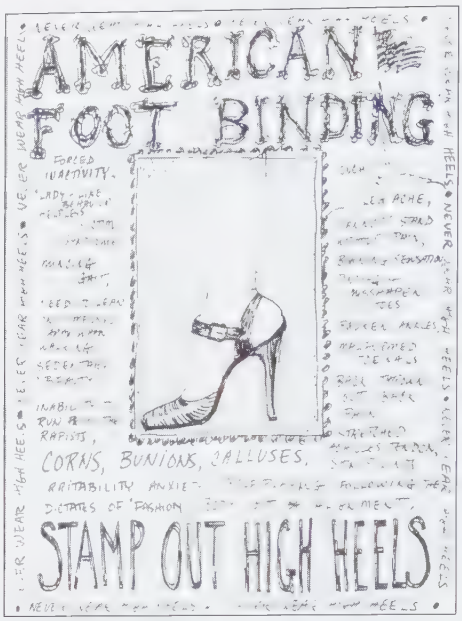
These manifestos were my own wake up call in the 1970's

There's the pleasure of rereading the manifestos that were my own wake-up call in the '70s: Poet and leftist activist Robin Morgan's "Goodbye to All That," written in 1970, remains a brilliant, gutsy analysis that brands the left just as sexist as the rest of society. To quote just a few of the many "Goodbye" insights: "We have met the enemy and he's our friend. And dangerous....*We are the women that men have warned us about.*" This strikes a chord going back to the ancient warnings about Lilith, a dangerous, powerful, woman-on-top female, not a role model for nice Jewish girls.



Documenting the call to rebellion in dress, one of the book's most appealing posters.

And there's the gratification of rereading Anne Koedt's "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm," published in 1973. How truly liberating to be reminded that Freud was anatomically wrong; the clitoris, not the vagina, is where the nerve endings are. In Koedt's phrase, "Invisible Woman" refers to men's "refusal or inability to see women as total, separate human beings.... Sexually, a woman was not seen as an individual wanting to share equally in the sexual act." Substitute "religiously" for "sexually" and "religious act" for "sexual act" and you get lots of the Jewish establishment restrictions on women that inspired the creation of Lilith magazine in this same time period, bringing the issues of women's liberation to Judaism.

If some of the entries in *Dear Sisters* seem dated in their polemics, in part it's a measure of the movement's success in having changed our thinking. At the same time, the issues persist. Abortion remains under fire and silver-haired white men continue to rule Congress.

The *Dear Sisters* editors have gone from partici-

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pating in the women's liberation movement to teaching women's history in universities. They make the point that despite the movement's determination to uncover women's history, misconceptions about the women's liberation movement come in part from the lack of a history of the movement itself. We want to give them sisterly support but also want them to check their facts. For example, the causes they cite for the start of the Berkeley free speech movement are simply not correct.

Dear Sisters does include a final leap to the end of the century with the all-women Lilith Fair. This group of women musicians grossing 35 million dollars from just two musical tours is given as an example of female cultural and financial success. Now there's proof of the movement's impact.

—Amy Stone

Reviews continue on page 46.

Renee Ghert-Zand *is the Museum Educator for Jewish Schools and Family Programs at the Museum of Jewish Heritage - A Living Memorial to the Holocaust in New York City.* ***Rachel Josefowitz Siegel*** *is a 76 year old writer, retired psychotherapist, and co-editor of Jewish Mothers Tell Their Stories: Acts of Love and Courage.* ***Amy Stone*** *is one of the founders of Lilith.* ***David J. Zucker*** *is Rabbi/Chaplain at Shalom Park, in Aurora, Colorado.*

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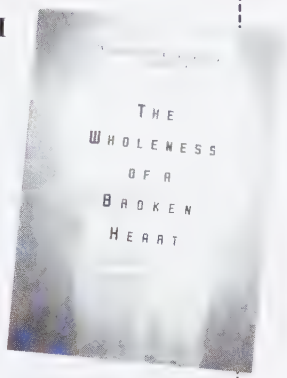

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ETERNAL WORRY

continued from page 26

The Debate

"You're letting your daughter live in Los Angeles?" my friend said, some weeks before my trip.

This man is a serious worrier, one of the few I've met who's up there in the majors with me. He won't let his kids take a bus, walk alone on the shopping streets of our middle-sized city. He would never let a child of his move to any city, let alone one clear across the U.S.

"Why don't you make her go to college?" he asked, when I told him of my daughter's plan to work in LA.

"I don't want to make her go to college," I said. "She isn't ready for college. She's too young. She's tired of school and needs a break. I'm worried that if she's forced into going to school, she'll flunk out. The damage to her self-esteem will sink her."

"You're worried she'll flunk out, but not worried about letting her live alone in Los Angeles?"

"It's different," I said, feigning utter unconcern. "She's a good worker. She has street smarts."

Knows enough to go to a restaurant to use the phone, to call our hotel, and leave a message on voice mail, saying, "Ma, where the hell are you? I'm at the marina; you said not to turn back."

"You're nuts," my friend said. I should have refused to support her, should have made her go to college, "like everyone else."

In defense, I tried to explain that our fears were the same. The disasters that I conjured up, full of sight and sound, were at least as vivid as his. If I could not measure my serotonin levels against his, I could make a cultural case. Not only did I, personally, worry as much or more than he, but I was part of a culture famous for worry. We eat lox, we answer questions with questions, we worry. Our defense mechanism is a kind of ghetto humor that masks our terror. (Me, yapping away in print as if this is a joke, when really I am talking life or death.) We have historical reasons to worry, having faced inquisitions, pogroms, and the Holocaust. Maybe, through natural selection, Jewish non-worriers, those less easily aroused, died off.

Cities were full of unthinkable things — murder, robbery, rape. I tried to keep my fear of these things in a locked box, because I knew that when the lid was lifted the tiniest bit, the wild, ungovernable, shrieking, Leprosy-fearing part of myself would emerge. The fears I had about her future felt more rational.

Listen, I wanted to say to my friend. Just because I worried about the water quality while still in the womb, doesn't mean that she shouldn't swim!

Before I lost her, it had seemed to me that I had done everything I could to teach her how to live safely in a city. Just because you know your neighborhood, doesn't mean it's safe, I told her. Never linger in your apartment lobby. If an elevator opens, and a man is inside alone, don't get on. Wear your seat belt, even if you're just driving around the corner. Get out of your car if it breaks down on the highway.

But did I worry?

"Mom-mee?" she called out to me in a little voice, the day before our dusk adventure on the Strand. "I need to make a doody!"

The circuit between my amygdala and prefrontal cortex reverberated wildly. This is who I'm leaving alone in Los Angeles? I thought.

In the dark, way down by the marina in Redondo Beach, two towns away from where we had started out, I wondered which police force to call and when.

What Happened Next

I dove into the living room, snatched the glass from between her fingers, clutched her — startled, wiggling — against my pounding heart. I kissed her all over and thanked God and thought how lucky we were that I had seen her before she ate the glass. I blamed myself for being inattentive, because I loved her so deeply, and she was in my care. But I had broken no glass that I could remember. The blanket had just been washed. She was still in my arms, her bald head damp with my tears, when I understood that all danger could not be averted. You blink. You must. One day, in the neighborhood where a child has been abducted, you let your child walk alone. You let her go to school, though asbestos once insulated the pipes. You let her play in the playground, where a child fell off the bars and was brain damaged. You let her sleep at a friend's house. You let her go out at night. You let her drive. When you open the box, you know that danger is everywhere, no matter how careful you are, and that the only way to be alive is to acknowledge the danger that is real, avoid the obvious hazards, and then move forward.

In truth, none of my argument would hold water if I hadn't found my daughter that night. But I did, when finally I turned back. She was sitting on the curb by our rental car, unphased, somewhat bored. And I did say, "Wow, I was worried. We should have made better plans."

And then we unlocked the car, strapped on our seat belts, and turned to each other, ravenous, in synchrony. Worry had sharpened my senses, made me unbearably aware how vulnerable and beloved my daughter was, how much I would miss her, even if, God willing, knock wood, please please, she remained safe in the city.

Our conversation turned intense. Sushi or Chinese? Should we ride around until we found a place or consult our restaurant guide? We were deep in this passionate debate when I took my first deep breath.■

© 2001 Univ. of Nebraska Press; all rights reserved. *Jane Bernstein's fourth book,* Bereft–A Sister's Story, *comes out in paperback in April. She is Associate Professor at Carnegie Mellon Univ.*

כתב עת פמיניסטי

SELECTIONS FROM NOGA, ISRAEL'S FEMINIST MAGAZINE

Hear Israeli women's views directly from their own feminist publication, Noga. These summaries, prepared and translated by **Naomi Danis**, are from Noga's Fall 2000 issue.

VIAGRA FOR WOMEN?

The appearance of Viagra in April 1998 as a wonder drug to treat male impotence, jumpstarted research on female sexuality, reports **Hedva Yissachar**. After one year on the market, sales of the small blue pill exceeded $1.2 billion dollars. So it should be no surprise that doctors, scientists and drug companies are interested in it and in its active ingredient, Sildenafil, especially after it became clear that it increases blood flow not only to the male sex organ, but to the female as well. The year 2002 is when Viagra for women is expected to be on the market, but by then it may have many competitors.

Discussing female sexual dysfunction in public forums and the publicity received by various studies of sexual satisfaction give the research into female sexuality the aura of "new science." Yissachar reports on the suggestion that Viagra may herald a sexual revolution, as the contraceptive pill did. The idea that women, not only men, have a right to orgasm is revolutionary, particularly in a world where each year, says the World Health Organization, some two million girls have clitoridectomies precisely to prevent them from enjoying sexual pleasures.

Yissachar cites sexologist Gila Bruner at Tel Aviv Medical Center who questions whether Viagra will be efficient in helping women with sexual dysfunction. Bruner is concerned that similar physiology in men and women may not be enough to bridge the differences in the way females and males manage their sexuality. Men interpret sexual dysfunction as a blow to their masculinity, and therefore look for an immediate solution that will fix this "terrible failure" in their personality. In contrast, women see their femininity as comprised of many complex traits and roles. Interestingly, Bruner reports from her experience that many men who request Viagra report that the drug alone is not successful when treatment does not also relate to other aspects of their mating behavior.

Psychoanalyst and feminist Dr. Ruth Stein of Tel Aviv University Medical School says that a sexually attractive woman has great power, but she is also enslaved by this power. She has to put a lot of energy into attracting. "I have great respect for women who stubbornly age naturally and refuse to color their hair or prettify, themselves. I also understand women who want to continue to feel sexual, vital. We have the sweet illusion that if we consume something we will be worth more." Reflecting the new products, food additives, hormone replacements—and now Viagra—for affluent consumers to improve the quality of their lives and help a baby-boom generation stave off aging, Stein notes, "it is a moral imperative for a woman to reach a place where it is very clear to her what she wants. But this requires resisting enormous social pressures, while the keys to these social pressures and economic interests are still in the hands of men."

WOMEN'S HEALTH: WHOSE AGENDA?

Dr. Carmel Shalev, at a recent conference at Tel Aviv University, gave an overview of women's health issues in the second half of the 20th century. In the 50's, she said, the focus was on lowering mother/infant mortality by guaranteeing free hospital births and establishing the "Tipat Halav" maternal children health clinics across Israel. She went on:

In the 60's we discovered the birth control pill and the sexual revolution.

In the 70's we argued about illegal abortions and freedom of choice.

In the 80's we participated in the rapid development of medically assisted fertility, and were divided on the matter of surrogacy. We also discovered the dimensions of sexual, physical and psychological violence against women, and its toll on their health.

In the 90's we learned that the AIDS epidemic attacks women too. We learned Israel has a high mortality from breast cancer, particularly among Arab women, and that death following cardiac bypass surgery is higher for women than for men. In the second half of the century, the focus shifted from woman as child-bearer to woman throughout the course of her lifecycle.

At the same time we learned to recognize that social and environmental factors, among them discrimination, greatly affect women's health. Worldwide examples include higher rates of abortion for identified female embryos in India and female infanticide in China; nutritional discrimination; genital mutilation. In other societies there are expectations that are harmful to physical and psychological health of the female population, leading to eating disorders and smoking among young women. Educational level is correlated with improved health, and women still don't have access to equal education in many countries. Women are a majority among the elderly population in Israel, and this group is known to be weaker economically and socially. Elderly women do live longer than men, but suffer mainly from chronic illness and disabilities, whereas elderly men mainly tend to suffer acute illnesses that result in death.

SEX: MORE THAN TWO OF THEM; THE TRANSGENDER APPEAL

Transexual. Transgender. Transvestites. Cross dressers. Bigenders. Drag queens. Drag kings. Masculine women. Feminine men. Hermaphrodites. Androgynes. Cross genders. Gender benders. Gender blenders. Bearded women. Women bodybuilders. **Effi Ziv** defines terms and asks questions about the origin of sex and gender. Perhaps instead of a binary system, where you are either male or female, sexuality is really a circular continuum?

Subscriptions to Noga are $38 for four issues airmail; $30 surface mail; in Israel 100 NIS.
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New/Old Holidays

Equal Pay Day, Tuesday, April 3. The US Census Bureau statistics indicate that on average women earn 72 cents for every dollar that men earn. Activists will hold panel discussions, publish studies on the wage gap, organize public demonstrations and coordinate workshops on how to negotiate a fair wage with employers and how to lobby state legislatures for stronger state laws. *National Committee on Pay Equity, 1126 Sixteenth St. NW, Washington, DC 20036; (202)331-7343; fax (202)331-7406; fairpay@aol.com*

V-DAY is a global movement to end violence against girls and women. The V-Day Fund, established in 1998, allocates resources to grassroots, national and international groups that work to end rape, battery, incest and genital mutilation. Contributions to the V-Day Fund come from individuals, corporations, foundations, benefits and commercial performances of Eve Ensler's "The Vagina Monologues." A website serves as virtual headquarters for a worldwide movement. Plan an event now for next year's Valentine's Day. *www.vday.org*

A Night of Questions: A Passover Haggadah edited by Rabbis Joy Levitt and Michael Strassfeld, with accompanying music recorded by Shabbat Unplugged, offers a wide variety of commentaries, explanations and glosses on the traditional text. Participatory, inclusive and egalitarian suggestions show how to adapt your seder to incorporate feminist themes in our narratives, to engage the very young with songs, challenge older children, and accomodate and be welcoming of interfaith groups. Hagada, $18, CD, $16 from the *Reconstructionist Press, 7804 Montgomery Ave #9, Elkins Park, PA 19027-2649; toll free (877)573-7827; press@jrf.org*

Writers from the Margins

"The world needs to hear more outsider voices, to know how things look from the margins, and from underneath." Women's World is an international free speech network of women. Their new book *The Power of the Word II: Women's Voices and the New European Order* looks at gender censorship in the age of post-communism and ethnic war. $14, from *Women's World, 208 W. 30th St. #901, New York, NY 10001; (212)947-2915; fax (212)947-2973; wworld@igc.org*

NASAWI News, the publication of the New Association of Sephardi Mizrahi Artists & Writers International, is published bi-

Erasing Silences

"Violence against women is stalking, sexual harassment, snide remarks and rape...It is the blatant acceptance that the male is the head of the family, who can put down his partner's personality, curb her freedom, swear, give her an 'educational' slap, a black eye to show who is the boss...Violence starts with the raised voice, the raised arm the raised gun... It is the problem of our entire society." An Israeli website in Hebrew, English and Russian, created by longtime domestic violence activist Ruth Rasnic, explains the issues and offers resources for help. *www.no2violence.co.il*

art by Maureen Fain courtesy Center for Jewish Women and Law

A chain link brooch symbolizes the plight of *agunot*, women unable to attain a *get*—a Jewish divorce—from their recalcitrant husbands. The pin, designed by Lee Wolfe, is part of a campaign for public awareness of the urgency of finding *halakhic* solutions to this serious problem. $18 plus $2.50 shipping from *The Jewish Feminist Orthodox Alliance, 459 Columbus Ave #329, New York, NY 10024; (212)751-7133; fax (212)753-6054.*

Jewish Law Watch: is a bi-annual, bi-lingual (English/Hebrew) publication examining cases of *agunot* and the *halakhic* directions which the rabbinical courts should examine in order to free these chained women. *Center for Women in Jewish Law, Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, POB 8600, 91083 Jerusalem, Israel ; (972-2)679-0755; fax (972-2)679-0840.*

Women in prison in the US are incarcerated more for substance abuse than any risk they present to public safety. They need treatment, education, employment, and housing. Help women get out of the criminal justice system and rebuild their lives with a contribution to *Women's Prison Association & Home, 110 Second Ave, New York, NY 10003; (212)674-1163; fax (212)677-1981.*

Sexual harassment. A part-time worker at a fast food restaurant feels scared and upset at work because her co-workers are always staring at her breasts, showing her pictures of naked women, telling dirty jokes, and saying sexual things about her. This is illegal. What is sexual harassment? What can you do about it? Get a fact sheet explaining your rights from the *National Partnership for Women & Families, 1875 Connecticut Ave. NW, #710 Washington, DC 20009; (202)986-2600; fax (202)986-2539; info@nationalpartnership.org; www.nationalpartnership.org*

monthly. Send your short articles, essays, reviews and calendar listings to editor@ivri-nasawi.org. Deadline for copy is the 25th of each month. *Ivri-NASAWI New Association of Sephardi/Mizrahi Artists & Writers Int'l. 1033 N. Orlando Ave Los Angeles CA 90069; (323) 650-3157; www.ivri-nasawi.org*

Social Action

To Save a Life, To Save The World a second annual conference on Judaism and Health Care Ethics will be held on April 24. Challenging cases in pediatric, geriatric, and administrative health care will be presented by Jo Hammerman, Laurie Zoloth, rabbis Elliot Dorf, Gail Glickstein, Andrea London and others at *Beth Emet Free Synagogue, 1224 Dempster St., Evanston, IL 60202. call toll-free (877) 944-4401 x 255 www.parkridgecenter.org* Contact *Rabbi Gail Glicksman, Park Ridge Center for the Study of Health, Faith, and Ethics, 211 E. Ontario, #800, Chicago, IL 60611-3215; (312)266-2222 x245; glicksman@prchfe.org*

Ya~Ya (Youth Activists~Youth Allies), a New York City network of young activists and their adult allies, shares information and resources, and helps youth programs collaborate on a variety of social justice projects. The Ya-Ya Network is a project of The Rose & Sherle Wagner Foundation. Receive their weekly e-mail listings. *Ya-Ya, 250 W. 57th St., # 820, New York, NY 10107; (212) 581-6922 Fax (212) 245-1889; YaYaNetNYC@aol.com*

Study Stipends

The Jewish Education Leadership Institute with Loyola University School of Education offers a Masters of Education in Administration and Principal Certification with funded fellowships for selected candidates. Another program offers certification for Directors of Development in day schools and yeshivot. *National Jewish Day School Scholarship Committee; 333 Wacker Dr., #2750, Chicago IL 60606; (312)332-4172; fax (312)332-2119.*

International Fellowships for Women Graduate Students from countries outside the United States offers a $16,860 stipend for study or research in the United States. Available to women who are not American citizens or permanent residents. Awards support full-time graduate or postgraduate study, in all disciplines, for one year. The Foundation also awards several annual Home Country Project Grants ($5,000-$7,000 each) to support community-based projects designed to improve the lives of women and girls in a fellow's home country. *American Association of University Women AAUW Educational Foundation: (319)337-1716; /www.aauw.org/3000/fdnfelgra/internat.html*

Disaster Relief

Latet (Hebrew for "to give") the Israeli Humanitarian Aid Organization, in cooperation with local communities in El Salvador and India, is assisting earthquake victims. Since its founding in 1996, Latet serves as an umbrella to a coalition of over 45 Israeli grassroot organizations that deal with issues of poverty. Tax deductible contributions earmarked for Latet Organization may be sent to *P.E.F Israel Endowment Funds, Inc. 317 Madison Ave., #607 New York, NY 10017; (212)599-1260; fax (212)599-5981; pefisrael@aol.com* or directly to *Latet Organization account at Bank Hapoalim (number 12), branch 502, account # 249595. Latet's home office: (972) 3-686- 96 49; latet@inter.net.il*

The Jewish Coalition for Earthquake Assistance is working with partners in India and El Salvador. Send your check made out to JDC-El Salvador or India Earthquake Relief to *JDC, 711 Third Ave., 10th fl., New York, NY 10017; (212)885-0832; by credit card through www.jdc.org*

On Display

Paraphernalia of matchmakers and wigmakers, birth announcements, wedding contracts, amulets, school notebooks, report cards, cookbooks, challah and matzoh covers, Holocaust-era false papers, newsletters published by the League of Jewish Women in Germany, diaries, materials relating to Jewish feminist events, Jewish women clergy and Jewish women's education, artifacts of bat mitzvahs and innovative life cycle events are sought for an exhibit about Jewish women in the 20th century. Contact curator *Esther Brumberg, Museum of Jewish Heritage, One Battery Park Plaza New York, NY 10004-1484; (212)968-1800 x142; ebrumberg@mjhnyc.org*

Online history. You can view letters, personal papers, pictures and other materials on 250 Jewish women—with plans for continual expansion—on the newly launched virtual archive of the *Jewish Women's Archive, 68 Harvard St., Brookline, MA 02445; (617)232-2258; fax (617)975-0109; www.jwa.org*

The Mezuzah—once a humble container of parchment with a biblical inscription—now an art object. The next biennial juried competition for the creation of Jewish ceremonial art focuses this time on mezuzot. Submissions are due December 28, 2001—sponsored by *Spertus Museum, 618 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago IL 60605; fax (312)922-3934; www.spertus.edu*

—compiled by Naomi Danis

When you help the other worthy organizations listed in these pages, please consider a tax-deductible contribution to LILITH, a crucial vehicle of communication and connection for Jewish women. Mail a contribution to LILITH, 250 W. 57th St., #2432, New York, NY 10107; Call 1-888-2-LILITH or fax 212-757-5705 to contribute by credit card. Thank you!

Continued from page 39.

When I Lived in Modern Times

by Linda Grant
E.P. Dutton, $32.95

Winner of Britain's prestigious Orange Prize, this novel, set in 1946 in Tel Aviv, seems too much about modern times and not enough about living. Although a compelling tale of an isolated woman in pre-State Israel, the narrative takes a backseat to the idealism and ideologies of time and place.

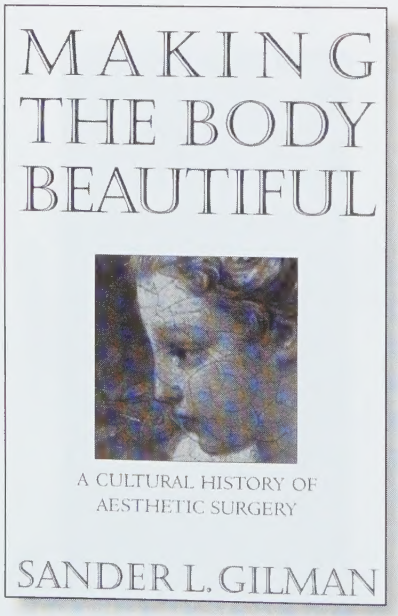
We experience Tel Aviv through the eyes of a twenty-year-old orphan. Evelyn Sert, daughter of a Jewish hairdresser, who grew up in unconventional circumstances in London's Soho, makes her way to Palestine in spite of immigration restrictions and the naval blockade. After a short stint on a kibbutz in the Galilee, she moves to Tel Aviv and settles in as a hairdresser ministering to the needs of British military wives. But the author is more interested in exploring pre-state Israel in the context of modernism and history than in developing Evelyn's story and identity.

Evelyn comes into contact with stock characters: the bitter *yekke* landlord, the feminist German refugee neighbor, anti-Semitic British soldiers and their wives, and the tough, mysterious boyfriend who is a secret member of the Irgun. These characters deliver little more than ideological monologues, which is a pity. It would have been interesting to see how Evelyn might have formed her identity and made Israel her home through day-to-day interaction with these characters. Instead, the novel suddenly and disturbingly shifts gears, galloping along at a thriller-like pace before returning to the more ruminative style of its beginning.

It is clear that Grant researched her subject thoroughly. One of this book's pleasures is her description of the young Tel Aviv with its white Bauhaus buildings, debilitating heat and blinding Mediterranean light. But the reader still gets the feeling that Grant is new to her subject. Indeed, it was a first visit to Tel Aviv in 1998 that inspired Grant to write this novel. Despite its shortcomings, thanks to *When I Lived in Modern Times* we are able to visit the Tel Aviv of 55 years ago, a rare treat.

—Renee Ghert-Zand

Making the Body Beautiful
A Cultural History of Aesthetic Surgery
Sander L. Gilman



This is a profound, provocative, and engaging study of how humans have sought to change their lives by transforming their bodies.

"A [wide-ranging] and enjoyable work. . . . Gilman has an eye for detail, yet remains aware of the wider perspective. . . . Fascinating. . . .Rich, elegant and beautiful."
—The Times Literary Supplement

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—The Economist

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The Woman's Kabbalah: Ecstatic Jewish Practices for Women

by Rabbi Tirzah Firestone
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When an esoteric, mystical side of Judaism introduces a cosmos that includes a female side of God—the Shechinah—you know it's just a matter of time before women adapt these teachings for ourselves. In the case of the Kabbalah, the secret teachings traditionally forbidden to anyone not a Jewish male, married and over 40, it has taken centuries to reach the consumer mainstream of paperbacks, web sites, show biz personalities and—finally—a feminist interpretation by Rabbi Tirzah Firestone.

Firestone, a Jungian psychotherapist and Jewish Renewal rabbi in Boulder, Colorado, guides the listener through some Kabbalistic basics and then, with a Jungian interpretation, moves on to guided and creative meditations. Her goal is leading women—both Jewish and non-Jewish—into finding our own *maggid* or inner guide. She defines "ecstasy" not as a trance or drug-induced condition but a state of exalted delight. Who wouldn't go for that?

On the other hand, Firestone is not giving a recipe for instant enlightenment. She advises us not to be disappointed if nothing happens at first and includes a list of resources in the study guide.

The "ecstatic practice" of lighting Shabbat candles does seem doable, even for a skeptic. Firestone draws on the image of the two similar and equal candles as representing the feminine and masculine aspects of God in sacred union, bridging heaven and earth. She suggests meditating on the space between the candles as the highly charged doorway to another realm.

How comfortable to have that doorway open through one of the few ritual practices at the heart of Judaism that belonged to women right from the start.

—A.S.

"Heartwrenching . . . A beautiful story, beautifully told."*

Eileen was an unmarried 16-year-old living in Glasgow when she gave birth to a daughter, Barbara—a daughter she gave up for adoption. Forty-two years later Eileen is living in Arizona and receives a letter from Barbara with a plea for a meeting. The reunion takes on a special urgency, as, in an awful coincidence, both women are suffering from cancer and have a short time to live.

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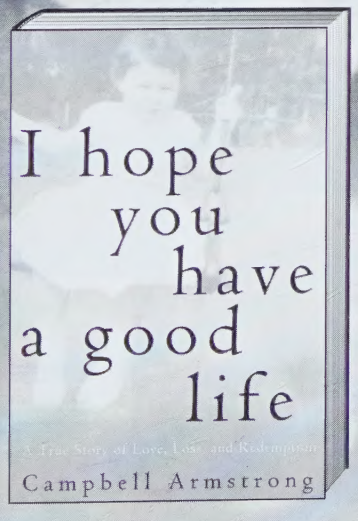

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Matka

ROCHELLE RUBINSTEIN

To live with her was to sit completely on the floor,
entirely on the grass, wholly in the hollow
of her crossed legs, utterly in the mud.

To live with her was to sing out all the notes
even if you didn't know most of the words,
to scribble down each idea that sprang at you in the dark,

to recall the exact phrasing of every folded message
you found tucked under your pillow.
To live with her was to suffocate inside

bear hugs padded by soft smothering breasts,
to eat boiled kielbasa with mashed potatoes,
to smell pierogis frying and fresh grated cabbage.

To live with her was to live with all the windows open,
all the doors unlocked, the slugging rhythm
of the washing machine music to dance to,

the living room rug center stage, where
she taught you the shimmy and the polka.
Living inside the sights of her rifle,

Ja mam dobre matka, always at the center,
kocham, kocham, the red dot in the middle of the bull's eye,
Moja matka jest dobra, you were the focus of her undivided attention,

the direct hit,
the aim of her bullet love.

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Donna Kaz is a poet, lyricist and playwright who lives in New York City.

Big Horn PASS✡VER

by Donna Ka

Instead of lamb I eat angus steer medium rare drenched in Heinz 57,
play pool with the only other customer while the juke box
blasts a song about blue, and that's when he comes in
holding the local paper out in front of him like it was a matzo.

Mud spattered on his black hat, cattle dung caked on the heels of his boots,
gold buckle guarding the flat of his stomach, and except for the circle cut
made by the tin of Skoal in his right front pocket, his Wrangler rodeo jeans fit smooth
like they were poured from a mold of his waist on down.

He curves against the bar and leans left chewing on his paschal side of beef,
I know this night will be different from all other nights
as he eats without a sound, not even a faint scrape of the fork against the plate,
leaving nothing, his appetite huge and endless.

Suddenly he saunters (yes, I now know that I have never seen anyone saunter before)
and with outstretched arm his mighty hand tucks two quarters under
the lip of felt on the table. On all other nights I drink eight dollar glasses
of cheap red wine passing for Merlot in pretentious Soho bars

but on this night I drink Red Dog beer from the bottle in the oldest bar in Wyoming.
The game slows as winning is overshadowed by the tingling thrill of the chance
to play the cowboy. Counting the five solids I've left stranded I'm thinking my luck is cursed
when my partner calls the corner pocket and scratches out.

Without a blink the cowboy is racking up
saying "I'd like to play partners. You and me
'gainst the bartender and the loser." He sidles towards me
(never saw anyone sidle either) sticks his hand out.

I grab what feels like grade 10 sandpaper,
his grip a sawdust massage, scream my name in his ear over the music,
pick up my stick, swallow hard, taste the bitter marinade
the steak has left on my tongue and bank a clean shot.

The angel of death hovers overhead and then passes.
A pack of cattle moves down the street outside,
the cowboy smiles and the distance between my house and his
falls together like the Red Sea.

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Donna Kaz is a poet, lyricist and playwright who lives in New York City.